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Perceptions in a Changing World: Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Implementation of Educational Innovations

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PERCEPTIONS IN A CHANGING WOLRD: TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS

by

Joy Yvonne Jones

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Dr. Megan Adams & Dr. Iván M. Jorrín Abellán, Chairs

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my amazingly supportive family. To my children, Amirah and Caleb, I dedicate this piece of work to you. There were countless evenings that you asked if we could go to the park or play a game of Uno or Trouble. Unfortunately, at times I had to say no because “Mommy had homework to do.” However, you never cried or made me feel guilty. Instead, both of you would respond with “Okay, Mommy” along with a hug or kiss. Words could never express how much that meant to me and how much I love you both. So I dedicate this dissertation to you in hopes that I have made you proud. You are my heartbeats. To my parents, Clifford and Dr. Fran White, I thank both of you for always believing that I could achieve anything I put my hard work into. Your consistent words of encouragement and support have truly helped me persevere through this challenging process. Finally, to my loving siblings, Maisha, Angel, and Eric. Thank you for always cheering me on. Your optimism and positive comments gave me the desire to carry on. I love you all with all of my heart and cannot express how blessed I am to have each of you by my side.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of educational innovations - with an explicit focus on social and emotional learning (SEL) and new teacher mentor (NTM) programs. Because teachers are primarily responsible for absorbing new information and implementing educational programs directly to students, their attitudes may influence how the program is perceived, the program's delivery, and may also impact the program's outcomes. Support for novice teachers is often regarded as necessary and warranted in many schools, and researchers unfailingly reveal findings that demonstrate the effectiveness of SEL; specifically in traditional school settings (Slaten, Irby, Tate, & Rivera, 2015). Due to the success of the programs, many Title I schools and districts have adopted both SEL and NTM programs, and incorporated them into their educational organizations to improve teaching and learning. Aiming to explore the effects of teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of the aforementioned programs, a multiple case study approach was employed using semi-structured interviews and focus groups to gain an understanding of the perceptions of educators in elementary and middle Title I urban schools in the Southeastern region of the United States. Five elementary teachers participated in an intrinsic case study addressing their perceptions and

attitudes toward the implementation of social and emotional learning; while four middle school teachers participated in an intrinsic case study addressing their perceptions and attitudes toward the implementation of a new teacher mentor program. All ten participants were asked “open-ended questions minimizing categorical and yes-no questions” (Stake, 2010, p. 90), and were observed in order for the researchers to directly see data relating to the story told during their interview. The four middle school teachers also participated in focus groups. The paper is divided into five chapters. In each chapter, the researchers described the components of case study one (SEL), followed by case study two (NTM). A cross-case analysis of both case studies is included in order to address the common tension that has been identified in both cases.

KEY WORDS: social and emotional learning, Title I, teachers’ attitudes, teachers’ perceptions, teacher mentors, new teacher mentor program, new teacher support, induction programs, urban, multiple case study

Chapter 1: Introduction

General Introduction to the aim of the collaborative proposal (Cross-case)

The study of teacher attitudes, as well as their beliefs are pertinent for understanding and determining the successes and failures of educational innovations. Teachers' attitudes are deeply connected to the strategies that they use to promote teaching and learning (OECD, 2009). "They shape students' learning environments and influence student motivation and achievement" (OECD, 2009, p. 89). Both researchers of this dissertation sought to use a multiple case study to determine if the attitudes of teachers are hindering the success of teaching and learning through the use of social and emotional learning (SEL) and new teacher mentoring (NTM) programs. As professionals in education working as instructional coaches in Title I urban school environments, both researchers are interested in the role that the attitudes of teachers play in educating themselves, as well as their students. It is important to examine teachers' attitudes to seek an understanding of the effects that their attitudes may have on their practices. The researchers employed a joint and collaborative study to determine if SEL and NTM programs, two educational innovations that have proven successes, are affected by the teachers who implement them.

Delving into teachers' perceptions on implementing SEL in a southern Title I urban elementary school is necessary to determine the ways in which teachers' attitudes affect the program; which in turn affect student learning. It is also necessary to examine teachers' perceptions regarding the support that is provided through the NTM program at an urban Title I middle school in the southeast region for teachers' attitudes can affect their willingness to engage in the program with fidelity. Using a multiple case study approach aided the researchers in determining if a common tension exists in the implementation process of both programs. The next part of the chapter will provide an introduction to new teacher mentor programs.

Research Question (Cross-case)

The study was driven by this overall question: Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning? However, each case study will be driven by other particular questions.

Introduction to Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Implementation of a new teacher mentor (NTM) program.

Teacher retention is not an issue that has recently emerged in the field of education. It has been acknowledged as a significant issue that has plagued many educational systems in retaining teachers (Ferguson-Patrick, 2011). McDonald (1980), conducted a study to examine new teacher induction programs in the United States. He explains that new teachers often feel inadequate and unprepared. Although, teachers spend approximately four years in a teacher preparation program, there are experiences that a textbook nor professor can prepare new teachers to handle efficiently (McDonald, 1980). A teacher's experience during their early years of teaching can be referred to as the induction phase (McDonald, 1980). According to McDonald (1980), this phase is extremely important and can set the stage for a teacher's career. If the teacher can master the "induction" phase, then he/she will most likely succeed as a teacher (McDonald, 1980). However, if mastery does not occur, then the teacher will fail (McDonald, 1980). Several decades ago, educational systems did not have programs in place to support teachers during the induction phase. This timeframe in a teacher's life was the individual's own responsibility. Instead, the programs were merely orientations that provided information about personnel and curriculum. (McDonald, 1980).

Induction is also referred to as a transition phase in a teacher's career where the professional moves from "preparation to practice" (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko, 1999). This process may be informal and can occur without the support of a teacher mentor (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille,

Carver, & Yusko, 1999). Teachers are expected to retain the concepts, pedagogical strategies, and skills that are learned in preparation programs and apply them in their professional practice. New teachers' challenges are described by McDonald (1980) as classroom management, instruction delivery, organization of resources for instruction, assessment of students, and communication of assessment results to students and parents. McCormack, Gore, & Thomas (2006), explain that new teachers are expected to deliver quality instruction as they "grapple with the demands of teaching full time which include programming, catering for a range of student needs, assessment and reporting and the overriding issues of classroom management" (McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2006, p. 96) These challenges have remained constant throughout the years, while new teachers are faced with even more concerns that have risen due to the United States' growing enrollment (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Educational reform calls for teachers to implement more rigorous strategies that require students to learn at a higher level and in some cases, a faster pace. This requires teachers to effectively assess students and differentiate lessons and activities to meet the needs of such diverse populations. Although often taught in preparation programs, educational skills of this capacity are mastered and developed through actual application, beginning in the induction phase. Most preparation programs immerse individuals into a classroom setting while participating in the preparation program. This is a strategy used to help the teacher candidate experience what is expected of teachers on a daily basis. The teacher of record models and monitors the application ensuring effective implementation is occurring.

New teacher development is a process that takes multiple years and is considered long-term. Therefore, it is imperative that mentorship is ongoing and intentional. According to Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko (1999), "educative mentoring" is a term coined by researchers that describe mentors as providing immediate support while guiding the novice teacher in progressing towards long-term goals. These mentors view themselves more as "teachers of teachers," helping their mentees

develop tools for teaching. Teacher mentors are often used in formal mentoring programs in school districts and local schools. With great emphasis placed upon new teacher development in the U.S, it has now become a common practice for new teachers to participate in a mentoring program. Federal educational initiatives, such as No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C § 6319), have been a driving force in providing support to new teachers. Through this initiative, high expectations were set for student achievement, making new teacher development and support a priority. In 2009, the Race to the Top initiative, featured five reform areas for states that agreed to compete for federal funds: designing and implementing rigorous standards and high quality assessments; attracting and keeping great teachers and leaders in America's classrooms; using data to inform decisions and improve instruction; using innovation and effective approaches to turn-around struggling schools; and demonstrating and sustaining education reform (Bullough, 2012). Implementing effective teacher mentoring programs in school districts and local schools can be a factor in attracting and keeping great teachers for educational reform. Wong (2004), reported attrition rates for the following districts in 2001-2002:

- Lafourche Parish Schools in Louisiana lost 1 teacher out of 46 hired
- Islip Public Schools in New York lost 3 teachers out of 68 hired
- Leyden High School District in Illinois lost 4 teachers out of 90 hired
- Geneva Community Schools in New York lost 5 teachers out of 67 hired
- Newport-Mesa School District in California lost 5 teachers out of 148 hired

Wong goes on to explain that all of the aforementioned districts with low attrition rates have in common are “comprehensive, coherent, and sustained induction programs” (Wong, 2004, p. 47).

Colley (2002), describes mentoring as the “in” thing and has been used as a teacher development strategy over the past 30 years. In the United States, several states have mandated that novice teachers

participate in a formal mentoring program at the district or local school level. The duration and structure of the programs may vary from state to state; however the intended outcomes are very similar. Mentoring programs are intended to help develop novice teachers' professional skills, including pedagogical and content knowledge. As a result, the quality of teaching would improve and thus, teacher retention would improve as well. There is also a social benefit to new teacher mentoring programs. Effective programs should produce quality teachers who would then proceed to develop individuals who can positively contribute to society. In 1998, California passed *Senate Bill 2042* in order to develop higher standards for teacher credentialing in the state. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing established standards-based criteria for teacher preparation programs and teacher certification. One of the bill's mandates require novice teachers to complete a two year induction program. Each participant had an Individualized Induction Plan (IIP) that consisted of goals, how the goals would be met, and evidence of meeting the goals (Bullough, 2012). By enforcing this law, California conveyed the importance of developing and supporting new teachers, with the desire of retaining quality teachers.

The structure and components of mentoring programs can be determined by the needs of the individual teacher as well as by the needs of the school. A school's social context may require a skillset that is specific to the demographics of the educational setting. Although new teacher mentoring programs are considered "common practice" in the United States, certain schools may view it more as a priority than others. Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko (1999), claim more urban districts offer support to new teachers in the form of mentoring programs, while more states are mandating that schools implement a formal induction program.

Personal Connection to the Research Topic

My journey at a Title I urban school has proven to be an invaluable experience. There I learned

what it means to truly teach the whole child. During my first year, I was considered a novice teacher, with only having 2 years of prior experience. At this time, the school was identified as Needs Improvement-4 under the No Child Left Behind school designation policy. Needless, to say, I faced several challenges as a new teacher, coupled with the unique school context in a Title I setting. Although, I was assigned a teacher mentor, I still needed a substantial amount of support to implement effective strategies in my classroom. Unfortunately, at the time, there was not a plan in place to address this problematic concern. Under new leadership the following year, the principal hired two Academic Coaches to assist teachers who need additional support and facilitate meaningful and relevant professional learning sessions.

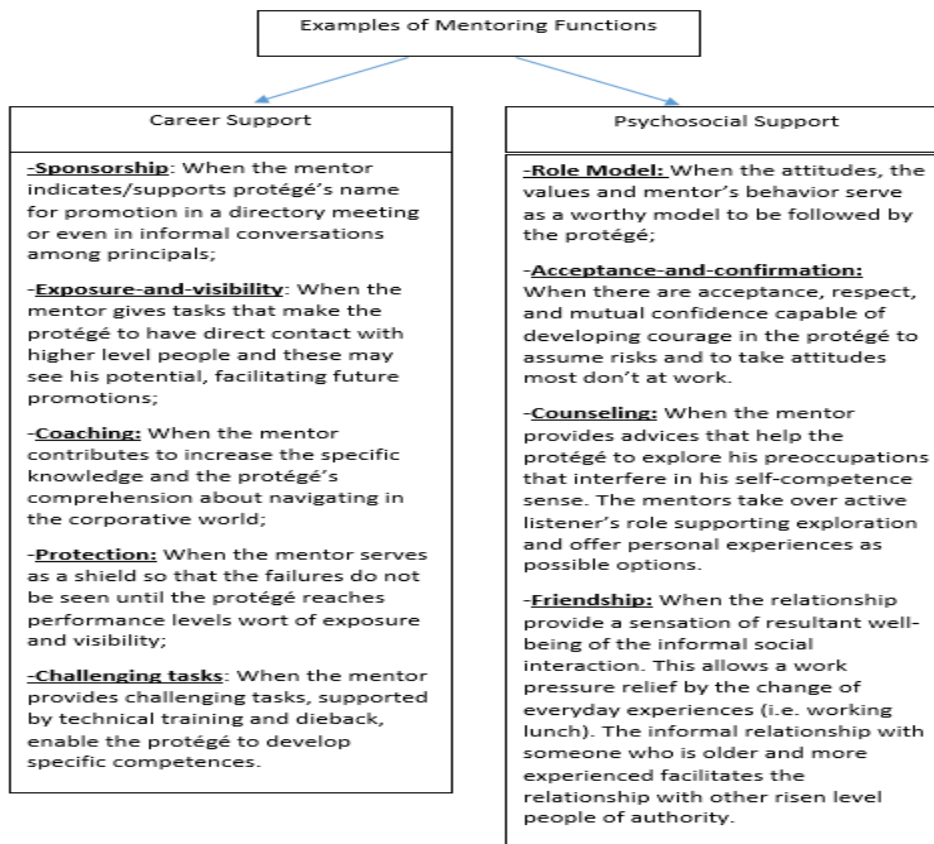
Providing teachers with this level of support proved to be a successful intervention. Each year, our state standardized scores increased in Reading, English Language Arts, and Math. Through my coaching sessions and professional learning experiences, I grew tremendously as a teacher. Administration recognized this progress and began to use me as a model teacher and peer coach. My passion for helping new teachers began to flourish per I knew first-hand the benefits of having a supportive teacher mentor and coach. As I transitioned into my role as an Academic Coach, I was given the task of coordinating my school's new teacher mentor program. I took this responsibility very seriously, as I knew how important this program could be to the continued success of a new teacher.

As teacher retention continues to be a growing concern in the field of education (The New York State Education Department, 2004), coupled with my desire to support teachers in their effort to become more effective, I decided to direct my focus for my study on the new teacher mentor program at my current school. I want to investigate new teachers' perspectives and attitudes toward their mentor's support and the professional learning activities that are implemented during the program so that I may use the data to inform my revisions in order to improve the structure of the mentoring program.

Conceptual Framework

Mentoring has proven to be an effective resource for novice teachers. According to Ensher and Murphy (1997), “research has found that mentoring has been positively related to career success for the protégé.” Several empirical studies have been conducted that examine characteristics of mentors, structure of mentoring programs, and the impact that both mentors and mentoring programs have on new teacher performance (Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore ,2003; Pogrud & Cowan, 2013; Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). However, Kathy Kram’s (1980) dissertation is known as the beginning of mentoring research and defines mentoring as a relationship between a mentor and mentee that consist of different phases (Ensher & Murphy, 1997). Kram describes two categories for mentoring: career development and psychosocial support (Scandura & Pelligrini, 2007). Mentors engage in sponsorship, coaching, exposure-and-visibility, protection and providing challenging work-related assignments to help develop the mentees professionally. However, psychosocial support helps the mentee develop their sense of competency, clarification of identity, and effectiveness in their occupation through the mentor role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, and friendship (Kram, 1983). The career and psychosocial functions are highlighted or provided based upon the needs of the organization and the protégé. Figure 1 outlines Kram’s theoretical framework for mentoring.

Figure 1. Kram's Theoretical Framework for Mentoring

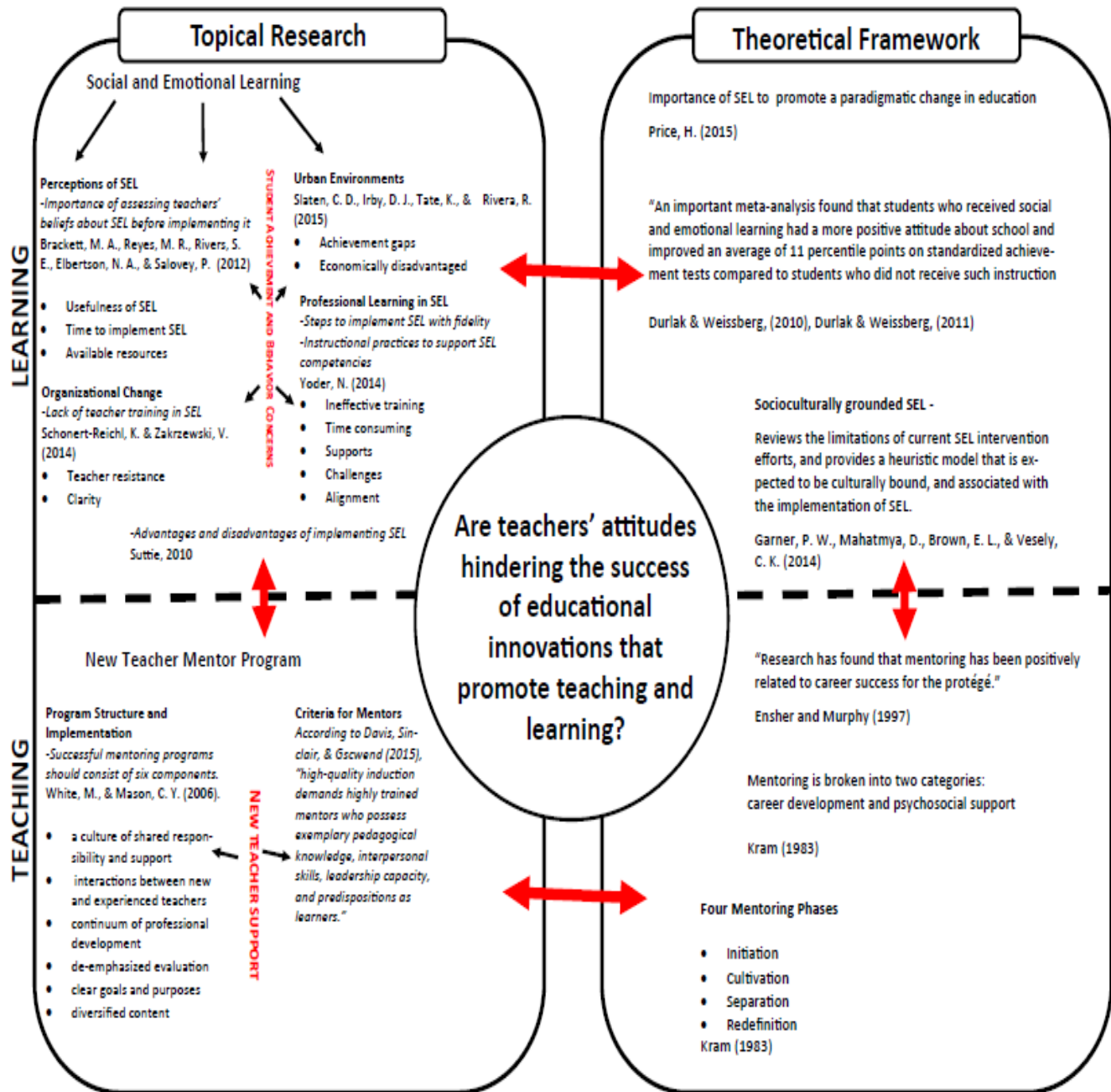


According to Kram (1983), there are four mentoring phases: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. During the initiation phase, the mentoring relationship has started and positive expectations are communicated. When the relationship progresses to the cultivation stage, the career and psychosocial support activities are exercised. While all mentoring functions may emerge, career development activities depend upon the rank or tenure of the mentor, while psychosocial functions depend upon the amount of trust and friendship that is present in the relationship. The third phase, separation, consists of significant changes to the career and psychosocial functions that are being provided. This process is intentional and allows the mentee to practice the skills learned in previous phases. Redefinition is the last phase, which is characterized as more of a friendship. Both mentor and mentee continue their relationship as an informal friendship.

Cross-case conceptual framework

As solitary researchers, both studies have demonstrated elements that are essential to examine. However, the multiple case study will serve as a collective effort to impact not only teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of SEL and NTM programs, but also how their attitudes affect the outcomes of those programs, which in turn affect teaching and learning. As both studies are intertwined, authentic results can be attained - both individually and collectively. The cross-case study will place more emphasis on the collective results, which extends beyond the individual studies and aims to enhance future inquiries. The cross-case study can be further explained in the graphical representation below (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Cross-Case Conceptual Framework



Statement of the problem

According to the Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics, over 270, 000 teachers left the profession in the academic year 2012-2013 (US Department of Education, 2014). Recently, Savannah-Chatham schools in Georgia announced the need to fill 450 teaching positions for the 2016-2017 school year. This stark reality is a concern in the field of education and several studies have been conducted to identify the root causes and identify solutions to this problem. As an attempt to address this issue, several districts and schools implement new teacher mentor programs where a novice teacher is paired with a veteran teacher, who serves as a mentor. Although, the structure of the programs may vary, the purpose is to provide novice teachers with an efficient amount of support that will aid teachers in being successful in their early years of teaching (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Pogrund & Cowan (2013) state, “Mentoring is typically defined as a relationship between an experienced and a less experienced person in which the mentor provides guidance, advice, support, and feedback to the protégé” (Pogrund & Cowan, 2013, p.352). The mentor provides support such as assistance with instruction, planning standards-based lessons, classroom management strategies, and understanding school-wide policies and procedures (Israel, Kamman, McCray, & Sindelar, 2014). An induction program or new teacher mentor program is defined as a “formal program for beginning teachers” (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko 1999). For the purpose of this research, the terms “new teacher mentor program” and “induction program” will be used interchangeably.

Many new teachers leave the profession due to the disconnection between their expectations of their success in their first year and the actual reality of the stresses they experience (Simos, 2013). Mentor/mentee collaboration that address different components of teaching can offer insight to specific strategies that can be used to help new teachers experience success early in their career. New teachers enter the profession with varying abilities, knowledge, and skills due to previous experiences and

teacher preparedness programs. Although, teacher programs may focus on pedagogy, content-specific knowledge, and classroom management, each school has unique contextual factors that contribute to new teachers' experiences. Unexpected external factors may result in additional challenges for new teachers. Providing new teachers with support can equip them with the necessary skills to implement effective strategies that yield successful results in student achievement.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine new teachers' perceptions and attitudes of the effectiveness of a new teacher mentor program implemented at a public middle school in the Southeastern region of the US. During this research, novice teachers with 0-3 years of teaching experience participated in a new teacher mentor program and were assigned a mentor as a means for additional support. Novice teachers participated in scheduled mentor/mentee discussions and were also required to attend four professional learning sessions that took place over the course of one eighteen week semester. I facilitated a focus group with novice teachers, conducted individual interviews, and took anecdotal observational notes of mentor/mentee discussions. An analysis of all the data that was collected was used to examine the new teachers' perception and attitudes of the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

Research Questions

1. How can the experiences of novice teachers be used to improve a new teacher mentor program in a local school?
2. According to the perceptions of novice teachers, what does it mean to effectively implement a new teacher mentor program at a local school?
3. Are the teachers' perceptions of the mentor program at FMS influencing its implementation? If so, how can we use them to improve the mentoring program?

The research questions guided the study in examining possible tensions that may exist. The following

are three tensions were explored:

- Do new teachers feel as though the scheduled discussions with their mentors are effective?
- Do teachers feel as though the new teacher mentor sessions are effective?
- Is the support that is provided effectively preparing new teachers to be proficient at the Title I school?

Summary

A positive classroom environment is essential to the process of learning. Previous research regarding SEL has shown a positive relationship between the innovation and student achievement (Durlak & Weissberg 2010). Consequently, it is imperative that teachers create an environment that promotes intellectual and emotional safety. Implementing SEL effectively can assist in accomplishing this goal; however, teachers' attitudes towards the innovation can affect how the components of SEL are being executed. This, as a result, may have an effect upon students' acquisition of new skills and concepts. Just as students' learning experiences are essential to achievement, so are the learning experiences of teachers. Novice teachers are still developing their pedagogical and content knowledge skills and can benefit from receiving support from a peer mentor. Many schools offer a new teacher mentoring program that novice teachers are immersed in to assist in improving teacher performance. Nonetheless, teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of the program can influence the attainment of new skills and as a result, teaching methods may be impacted.

As educators, we understand that there is a connection between teaching and learning and therefore, it is important to explore this relationship when implementing new innovations. In this dissertation, we sought to understand if teachers' attitudes towards innovations for teaching and learning affect the implementation of the programs. Diverse classrooms continue to change the dynamics of educational systems, causing shifts in approaches to teaching and learning. We used Ravitch and

Riggins conceptual framework to examine the concept of learning through SEL and the concept of teaching through NTM. Exploring this relationship by way of a case study approach can assist us in identifying solutions and improvements for the implementation process of both innovations; thus, having a positive impact on teaching and learning.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the current literature on new teacher mentor programs. New teacher support is an educational issue that researchers are continuously examining in an attempt to identify strategies that will develop new teachers' skills, competencies, and ultimately have a positive effect on student achievement (Choa, 1997; McCormick, Gore, & Thomas, 2006; McDonald & Flint, 2011). Several studies have been conducted to identify effective new teacher support and its impact on teacher retention and performance (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011; Israel, Kamman, McCray, & Sindelar, 2014; Davis, Sinclair, & Gschwend, 2015). This section will consist of a review of literature on new teacher mentor programs including information used to examine the components of effective new teacher mentoring programs and the criteria for effective teacher mentors. Keywords such as new teacher mentor programs, mentor characteristics, new teacher support, induction programs, and teacher development were used to ensure that the review of literature was comprehensive. The goal of the review is to provide a thorough understanding of new teacher mentor programs, in order to determine what the research says about how the programs impact teaching and learning.

Program Structure and Implementation

Implementing a new teacher mentoring program can offer a great deal of support to novice teachers. In a study conducted by Pogrund & Cowan (2013), 76 new teachers participated in a Texas state-wide mentor program for one academic school year. During this program, teachers were paired with a mentor who provided various sources of support. The support included guided problem-solving techniques, effective listening, and teaching resources. After completing a survey consisting of qualitative and quantitative questions, it was concluded that the participants felt as though the support provided had a positive influence on the quality of their teaching, thus aiding in teacher development.

New teacher mentor programs are designed not only to help develop the quality of teachers but also provide sufficient support so that new teachers are successful and ultimately remain in the profession. When developing mentoring programs, it is essential to include components that contribute to successful teaching experiences. Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore (2003), described the following six components being present in successful mentoring programs: (a) a culture of shared responsibility and support; (b) interactions between new and experienced teachers, (c) continuum of professional development, (d) de-emphasized evaluation, (e) clear goals and purposes, and (f) diversified content (Cited by White & Mason, 2006). Creating a mentoring program that fosters continued professional development, trusting relationships between mentor and new teacher, and relevant & meaningful support can contribute to positive teaching experiences. Researchers White & Mason (2006), conducted a study that examined the effectiveness of a new teacher mentoring program for special education teachers. The study consisted of 244 new special education teachers and 253 mentors across seven different national sites over the course of two years. The mentoring program was implemented using the guidelines that were developed by a nation committee of 27 experts in mentoring and professional development. The committee agreed upon the following three assumptions: 1. New teachers need knowledge, general support, and assistance with teaching skills. 2. New teachers become more proficient and confident by increasing knowledge of school, community, and special education and by increasing specific teaching skills. 3. As teachers receive support and increase their knowledge and skills, they will have increased feelings of self-esteem and increased job satisfaction, which will ultimately result in higher levels of teacher retention. There was an emphasis on developing teachers throughout this process with the belief that this would contribute to success in the early years of teaching.

During this study, mentors and new teachers received In-service support and mentors were given

the opportunity to observe new teachers. This component of the program is key per it offers the mentors the chance to provide feedback and have critical conversations with new teachers. The program also allowed new teachers to observe other classrooms, providing an interactive atmosphere for professional development. In addition, all participants were given a final survey to complete addressing their perceptions of the mentoring program. The results revealed that new teachers were satisfied with the quality of help that their mentors provided when assistance was sought. New teachers were also asked about the influence their mentors, administration, and the mentoring program had upon their decision to stay in special education. The study found that these three factors had “very little” or “moderate” influence on the new teachers’ decision. However, when asked if the district should continue to offer a mentoring program, 98.5% responded “yes.” From these results, one could conclude that the new teachers still felt as though the program was an additional means of support.

Criteria for Mentors

The selection process for choosing mentors for a new teacher mentor program is an essential component to implementing an effective program. Pogrund & Cowan (2013) suggest selecting veteran teachers who are high quality mentors and are the type of mentors that are needed for specific types of teachers. Even though it has been claimed that mentor preparation is needed, there is still a lack of mentor programs that provide professional learning for developing mentors (Aspfors & Fransson, 2015). One case study by Monica & Alina (2011), focused on examining the perceptions of the roles of teacher mentors. During this study, there were 40 participants from the Faculty of Computer Science from the University of Timisoara. The participants were given teacher mentors for two semesters. The results of the study revealed that the participants viewed their mentors as evaluators and were not fond of this role. The researchers recommended reflecting upon the manner in which mentors gave feedback to the participants.

Another study conducted by Hennissen, Crasborn, Brouwer, Korthagen, & Bergen (2011), studied the perceptions of pre-service teachers about the support that was provided by their mentors. Thirty pre-service teachers were paired with a mentor during their final year of college. Thirteen pairs participated in the Spring of 2002, while 17 pairs participated in the Spring of 2003. Qualitative data was collected about six mentoring skills of mentor teachers. The study revealed the following six mentor skills were perceived by pre-service teachers as offering emotional support: summarizing content, giving positive opinion, showing attentive behavior, showing genuineness, summarizing feeling, and giving information.

Maria-Monica & Alina (2013), conducted research regarding student teachers' perspectives of the qualities of mentor teachers. Eighty student teachers interacted with 12 mentor teachers for two semesters in two top high schools. The researchers asked the following questions: What qualities should a good teacher-mentor have? What attributes are incompatible with being a good teacher-mentor? The top features that were mentioned for the first question were professional/specialist, pedagogical tact, model/integrity, passionate/enthusiastic, tolerant, sociable, communicative, decided, balanced emotional, upright, patient, empathetic, active, confident, calm, agreeable, cooperative, self-learning, incentive, available, kind, credible, flexible, serious, and helpful. Attributes mentioned that are incompatible with being a good mentor were inequitable/unjust, indifferent, apathetic, formal/distant, indulgent, demanding, expeditious, coldness/hardness, critical, intolerant, aggressive, disinterested, misinformed, uncertain, make mistakes, sprawling in teaching, disincentives, emotional, permissive, inflexible, conservative, sever, superficial, elliptical, and rigid. In my study, I conducted one-on-one interviews with each participant. There are three out of nine questions that address the qualities and behaviors of the mentors. The information gathered from these particular questions was used to enhance the mentor selection process that is already in place.

Although, several studies express the need for continued professional development for new teachers, when implementing a new teacher mentor program, research suggest a need to equip and develop mentors as well. According to Davis, Sinclair, & Gschwend (2015), “high-quality induction demands highly trained mentors who possess exemplary pedagogical knowledge, interpersonal skills, leadership capacity, and predispositions as learners” (Davis, Sinclair, & Gschwend, 2015, para 5). These researchers conducted a study that examined the preparedness of a select group of mentors that were charged with helping new teachers implement the Common Core State Standards curriculum in California. Over the span of three years, 75 mentors in 40 districts participated in ongoing professional development aimed in addressing three questions: How could we accelerate mentor understanding of the Common Core? How could we transform the Common Core mandate into an opportunity to deepen our mentoring practice and ultimately transform teacher practice? How could we leverage the standards to ask new teachers deeper questions about meaningful, relevant instruction?

The researchers concluded five lessons that may help mentors and new teachers navigate implementing the Common Core curriculum. First, mentors need ongoing professional development in order to assist new teachers with implementing the new curriculum. Mentors need to have ample exposure to the curriculum to gain a deeper understanding of the standards, so that they may internalize the concepts that will influence their teaching practices. Secondly, mentors need to have a broad understanding of the Common Core so that they may assist teachers in a variety of contexts. This is an important characteristic for mentors to possess, especially in schools that may have a high amount of new teachers each year. The third lesson taught the researchers to find new ways to use resources and relationships. Their affiliation with the New Teacher Center has yielded several grants that were utilized for professional development. The fourth lesson addressed the varying abilities and readiness of new teachers. Although, the focus of the mentoring relationship was implementing Common Core, mentors

had to determine how to differentiate strategies to meet the needs of the new teachers. However, some mentors may need training in how to differentiate for new teachers. Lastly, both mentors and new teachers can become Common Core leaders, facilitating professional development sessions to their fellow peers. One can conclude, that developing the mentor is an important aspect of a building a mentor/mentee relationship. It is imperative that the mentor exudes a high level of self-efficacy and is confident in his/her ability to effectively guide the new teacher.

Summary

This review of literature shows that implementing a new teacher mentor program can provide additional support to novice teachers. Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore (2003), described six components as contributing factors in a successful mentoring program: (a) a culture of shared responsibility and support; (b) interactions between new and experienced teachers, (c) continuum of professional development, (d) de-emphasized evaluation, (e) clear goals and purposes, and (f) diversified content (Cited by White & Mason, 2006). Developing activities and professional learning sessions that consist of these components can offer novice teachers strategies to implement during their early years of teaching. In addition to relevant and meaningful professional development activities, pairing new teachers with a good mentor has also proven to be effective. In a study conducted by Hennissen, Crasborn, Brouwer, Korthagen, & Bergen (2011), the perceptions of pre-service teachers about the support that was provided by their mentors was examined. The pre-service teachers described the following mentor skills as offering emotional support: summarizing content, giving positive opinion, showing attentive behavior, showing genuineness, summarizing feeling, and giving information. This study implicates that in addition to learning strategies related to content and delivery, novice teachers also need emotional support from their mentors.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As the researchers investigated tensions that exist separately in each case study, there was also a need to investigate a common tension between both cases: Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning? This qualitative multiple case study sought to determine if the teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards SEL and NTM are affecting the implementation of the programs. Analyzing data from both cases assisted the researchers in identifying strategies to resolve this common tension.

For this study we collected data from a total of 9 study participants. Both researchers will use three modes of data collection:

Case study 1 used interviews and observational notes to gather data, while case study 2 used interviews, a focus group, and observational notes to collect data. The researchers used two formal methods to collect data on the collaboration process: research journal entries and audio recordings of the researchers' conversations.

Case Study 2: Providing Support to New Teachers in a Dedicated Mentoring Program

This qualitative intrinsic study sought to understand the novice teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the new teacher mentor program at a selected middle school in the Southeastern region of the US. Qualitative data was collected through individual interviews, focus group, and anecdotal observational notes. The data was analyzed and the findings were used to make improvements to the new teacher mentor program.

Worldview and Research tradition followed

The purpose of this study is to examine the new teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the new teacher mentor program at the selected school. I assumed a social constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978) worldview when exploring this phenomenon. Social constructivism requires the researcher to "seek

understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, it is imperative for me to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the program in regard to the participants’ perspective. In social constructivism, meanings are constructed by humans as way to connect with the world in which they are interpreting. As a result, I used open-ended questions so that the participants could share their views. I then made sense of the information gathered and connected it with my own social and historical perspectives and meanings. Using a social constructivist worldview allowed me to construct meaning of multiple viewpoints concerning the same phenomenon. In this study, several different experiences and perceptions were examined regarding the effectiveness of a new teacher mentor program. Although, participants gave an account of the same program, they brought their own historical and social perspectives, and therefore, constructed varied meanings of an “effective mentoring program.”

This investigation used a case study approach (Stake, 1995), to explore the novice teachers’ perceptions. According to Creswell (2007), a case study is “a bounded system, such as a process, an activity, an event, a program, or multiple individuals.” Using a case study approach allowed me to examine multiple perspectives of the same program. A case study approach was most appropriate because I studied a bounded system as it naturally evolved. There was also tensions that were analyzed in order to better understand the functioning of my case. During this study, teachers’ experiences were used to better understand their approach to teaching, how they handled unforeseen challenges, and how they interacted with teacher mentors and leadership. This study was also a part of a multiple case study that examined the teachers’ perspectives of a different program that is implemented at another site. A cross-case analysis was conducted to address a broader research question: Are teachers’ attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning? Analyzing multiple cases provided the researchers the opportunity to identify similarities and differences between

the cases.

It is important that I explored the experiences and perceptions of novice teachers regarding their local school's new teacher mentor program. Individual's experiences are constructed and therefore, novice teachers working in the same school and even possibly teaching the same subject will still have different experiences. Brunner (2004) asks a key question "Does that mean that our autobiographies are constructed, that they had better be viewed not as a record of what happened (which is in any case a nonexistent record) but rather as a continuing interpretation and reinterpretation of our experience?" Exploring these varying differences amongst novice teachers gave insight to improving new teacher mentor programs in local schools.

Research Design

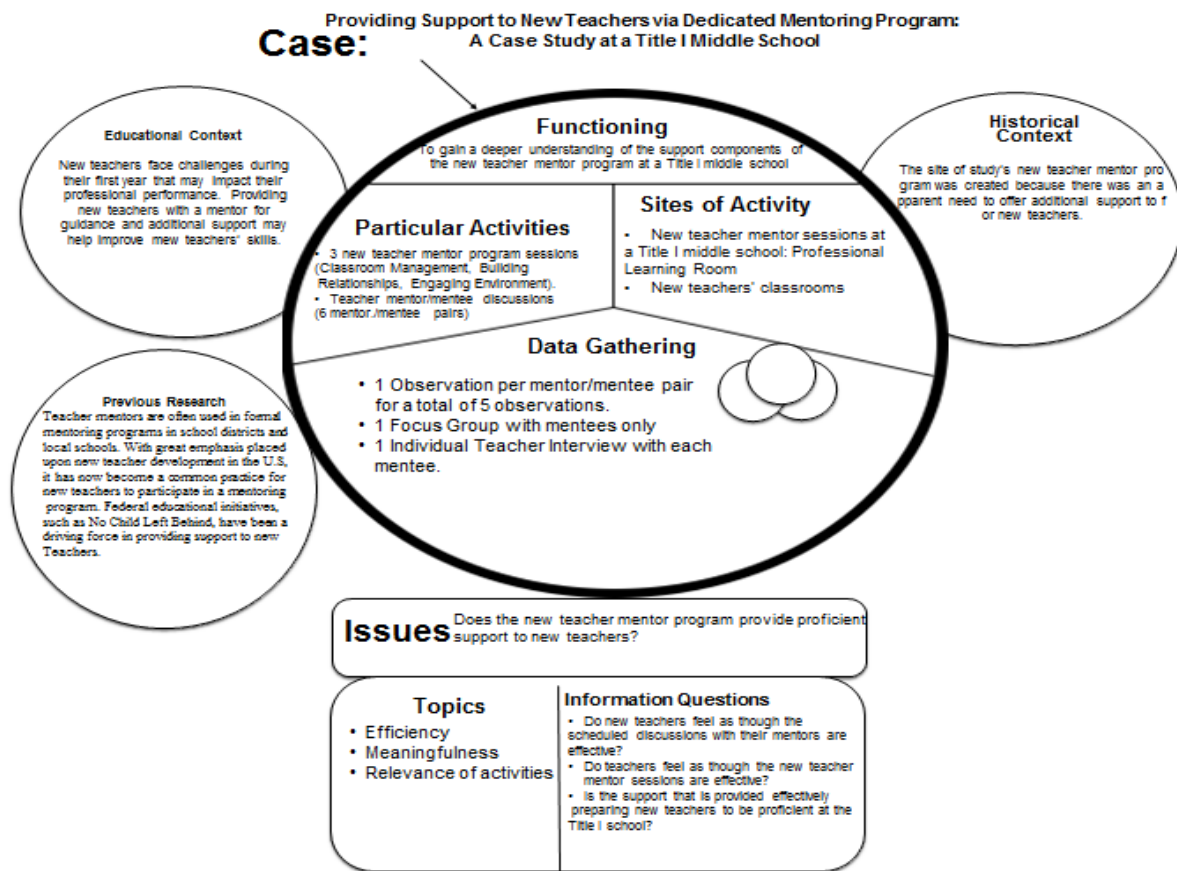
Key research questions. How can the experiences of novice teachers be used to improve a new teacher mentor program in a local school? According to the perceptions of novice teachers, what does it mean to effectively implement a new teacher mentor program at a local school? Are the teachers' perceptions of the mentor program at a local school influencing its implementation? If so, how can we use them to improve the mentoring program?

Setting. The participants of this study were a part of the second largest county school district in the Southeastern region of the US. Currently, the district serves 112, 708 students with a demographic breakdown as of spring 2016: 39% Caucasian, 31.5% African-American, 20.3% Hispanic, 5.2% Asian, 3.6% Multi-Racial, <1% American Indian, and <1% Pacific Islander. Approximately 44.8% of the students qualify for free/reduced meals.

The study took place at one urban middle school in the school district where I currently serve as the Academic Coach. This school was selected due to my responsibility of coordinating, facilitating and monitoring the new teacher mentor program at the school. As an attempt to improve the quality and

effectiveness of the program, I decided to use the participants of the program. The projected enrollment for the 2016-2017 academic school year is approximately 980 students consisting of grades 6th, 7th and 8th. The ethnic demographics of students from this school are 49% African-American, 38% Hispanic, 7.5% Caucasian, 2% Asian, 3% Multi-Racial, and .5% Hawaiian/American Indian. This particular middle school had a high transient rate and is located in a low socioeconomic area. The school is a Title 1 school with 78.8% of the students qualifying for free/reduced meals. The following graphic (See Figure 3), describes the different components of the case study.

Figure 3. Intrinsic Case Study - New Teacher Mentoring Program



Adapted from (Stake, 2005)

Participants. For this study, novice teachers from the public urban middle school were chosen to participate. Participants were chosen using purposeful sampling which is most appropriate for this study because I sought participants who are extremely knowledgeable about the program (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Participants were chosen based upon their years of teaching experience and their participation in the mentoring program. The four selected participants had 0-3 years of teaching experience and were deemed novice teachers. I paired each novice teacher with a veteran teacher who served as a mentor. During this study, the mentor teachers were not considered participants. Below Table 1 is an overview of the basic demographics of each participant (pseudonyms were used).

Table 1: *Participant Demographics*

Participant	Yrs. of Teaching Experience	Approximate Age	Role	Race	Certification	Highly Qualified
Angel	0	20s	Math Teacher	Caucasian	No	No
Maisha	1	20s	Science and Social Studies Teacher	Caucasian	Yes	Yes
Fran	2	40s	Social Studies Teacher	Caucasian	Yes	Yes
Amirah	0	20s	Science Teacher	African American	Yes	Yes

Data collection. For the purpose of this study, I used three modes of data collection in order to gather information regarding the new teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the program. I conducted individual interviews, facilitated a focus group with the novice teachers, and observed mentor-mentee discussions.

Interviews. Individual interviews were conducted to gain a better understanding of personal experiences in the new teacher mentor program at the selected school. Conducting interviews was essential to the case study because it allowed the participant an opportunity to expand upon his/her ideas, beliefs, feelings, and opinions about the new teacher mentoring program. When utilized intensely, this data collection method gathers a plethora of information that can be used to inform me about the Problem of Practice. The information gathered from the interviews was used to examine how the activities and mentor support in the program can be improved. Each participant interviewed in their classroom in an attempt to create a comfortable atmosphere. A protocol (*see Appendix D*) was used to

conduct the interview and the following nine questions were asked of each participant:

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
2. How many years have you worked at this school?
3. What subjects are you certified in?
4. Are you teaching in your field of certification?
5. From your experience, what type of support do new teachers with 3 or less years of experience need to help them be successful? Could you please provide examples to illustrate your response?
6. Do the New Teacher Mentor program activities have an impact on new teacher performance?
7. What qualities do you feel a good mentor should have?
8. What type of support did you receive while participating in the New Teacher Mentor program? Could you please provide some examples?
9. Do you feel the support you received was effective? Could you please provide examples to illustrate your response?

Focus Group. As mentioned previously, I facilitated a focus group with all three out of four of the participants in attendance per Maisha could not attend due to an illness. The purpose of the focus group was to seek to understand the participants' perspective of the effectiveness of the professional learning sessions of the program. Participants were required to attend sessions that focused on educational topics such as classroom management, building positive relationships with students, technology integration, avoiding stressful situations for new teachers, logistics of the school, and end of the year data analysis. A protocol (*see Appendix E*) was used while facilitating the focus group and the following six questions guided the discussion:

1. Which topics covered during the first semester of the New Teacher Mentor program did you find relevant and helpful?
2. If you were designing this program, which topics would you change and how?
3. Do you feel as though the number of sessions was appropriate for the first semester?
4. What experience level should teachers have to participate in this program and how long should they participate?
5. Do you feel the program structure provided sufficient opportunities for your mentor to give you support?
6. What component(s) of the program would you change and how?

Observations. I also used an observation protocol (*see Appendix F*) to take anecdotal observational notes during mentor/mentee discussions. The purpose of this data collection was to gather information regarding the type of one-on-one support that is given to novice teachers in the program and identify any common themes amongst the mentor/mentee pairs.

Research Procedure

A focus group session, lasting 25 minutes, took place at the end of a professional learning session in May 2017. I facilitated the group with the novice teachers to examine the new teachers' perspectives regarding the structure and activities of the program. The information was used to revise the remaining program sessions for the second semester.

Individual interviews took place in May 2017 during the new teachers' planning period. I followed the interview protocol mentioned earlier and conducted the interviews in each teacher's classroom. The purpose of conducting individual interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the new teachers' personal experience with his/her mentor. Therefore, the data gathered from the interviews was used to examine the new teachers' perceptions and attitudes of the effectiveness of his/her mentor.

I also took anecdotal observational notes during scheduled mentor/mentee discussions. The purpose of this data collection method was to look for patterns and trends regarding new teacher concerns. I also used the data to gather information about participant engagement and body language during the mentor/mentee discussions.

Data analysis

For this current study, I used Atlas.ti (“Atlas.ti”, 2016) to analyze the qualitative data that was collected. This is a scientific qualitative analysis software, which allowed me to identify various coding families in the transcribed documents from the focus group, individual interviews and my observational notes. I uploaded the documents to the software and identified repeating themes to use as code families. I used open coding and comments were coded using the code families.

Trustworthiness

In order to ensure that the study is trustworthy, I addressed the following four criteria that was proposed by Guba (1981): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To conduct a credible study, I had developed a positive relationship with the participants through my role as an Instructional Coach, ample time was spent facilitating the focus group, conducted several individual interviews, and took anecdotal notes to make sure that sufficient data was collected for the study. I also conducted in depth interviews to gather as much detail as possible so that persistent observations were implemented.

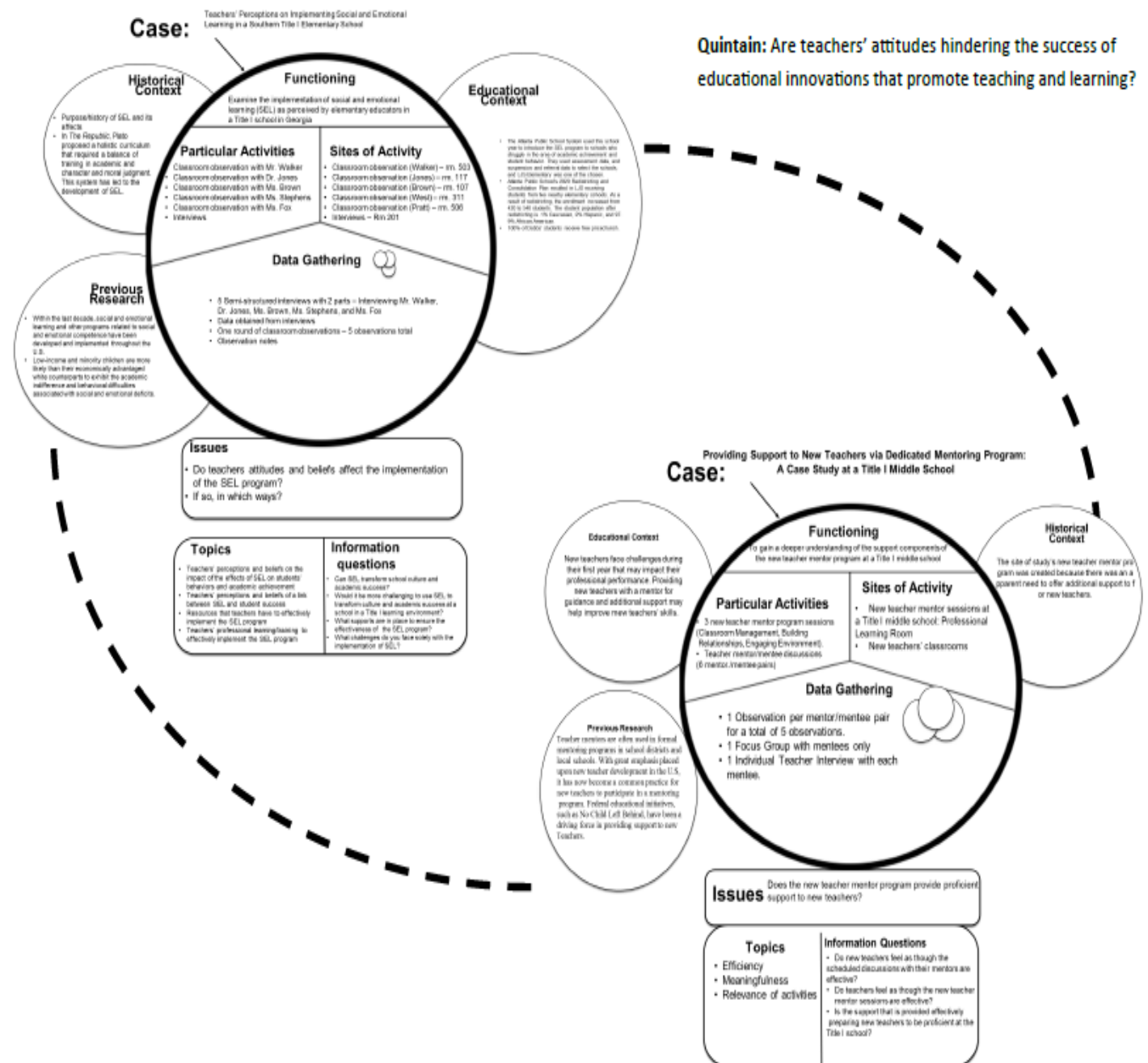
It is important that this qualitative study is considered transferable. When the audience reads the study, one should be able to resonate with the findings and conclusion of the study and see how the information is applicable to one’s own experience. Therefore, thick descriptions are needed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain thick descriptions as describing the study in great detail so that the conclusions can be transferable to other studies. Although, the study is regarding a particular new teacher mentor program at a specific school, another researcher may decide to conduct another study with similar

participants and setting. Therefore, I needed to make sure that the methodology is described in great detail. An inquiry audit was conducted to ensure accuracy and dependability. To conduct a study with confirmability, I had to omit my beliefs and assumptions and made sure I was only examining the information gathered from the participants.

Cross case: Description of the convergence of both research designs to illuminate Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Implementation of Educational Programs.

Although both researchers utilized the qualitative intrinsic case study approach, the data was integrated to address the cross-case research question: Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning? Because social and emotional learning focuses on student outcomes, the researcher used the collected data to emphasize the position of 'learning' in the cross-case research. New teacher mentor programs, on the other hand, addressed the position of 'teaching' in the cross-case research. This multiple case study helped the researchers conduct a cross-case analysis in order to illuminate the general topic of the dissertation "Teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of innovations" which was impossible by using any of the cases in a separate fashion. The differences between the two programs are apparent; however finding the relationship between the two enhanced and strengthened the researchers' efforts to determine if the attitudes of teachers truly impact the successes and failures of educational innovations - which are necessary to improve teaching and learning.

Figure 4: Cross-Case - Multiple Case Study



Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion of Findings

This chapter will consist of the findings and the discussion of the findings from the conducted study. The purpose of this study is to examine the new teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the new teacher mentor program at the case study site. The findings from the data collected through individual interviews, focus group, and observations will be presented in this chapter and interpreted to address the following research questions:

1. How can the experiences of novice teachers be used to improve a new teacher mentor program in a local school?
2. According to the perceptions of novice teachers, what does it mean to effectively implement a new teacher mentor program at a local school?
3. Are the teachers' perceptions of the mentor program at a local school influencing its implementation? If so, how can we use them to improve the mentoring program?

The findings will be presented and discussed in order to address the following tensions that were also described in chapter 3:

- Do new teachers feel as though the scheduled discussions with their mentors are effective?
- Do teachers feel as though the new teacher mentor program sessions are effective?
- Is the support that is provided effectively preparing new teachers to be proficient at the Title I school?

The individuals in this case study participated in a year-long new teacher mentor program that consisted of six sessions that are held once a month during the months of September-April, excluding December and January. The sessions took place after school in the school's professional learning room and lasts

approximately one hour. Each participant was assigned a mentor and was expected to meet with their mentor a minimum of once a month to discuss any issues where support is needed. The data collected from the instruments used was intended to shed light upon the teachers' perceptions of the new teacher mentor program and its implementation.

Process Followed

Four individuals (Fran, Maisha, Angel, and Amirah) participated in individual interviews to provide information regarding the support they received from their mentors and the program. Three out of four of the participants engaged in a focus group to obtain information about the sessions in the new teacher mentoring program. Maisha could not participate in the focus group due to an illness.

Observational notes were taken during mentor/mentee discussions with each professional pair. The purpose of this data collection method was to obtain any additional information about the mentor/mentee relationship. The following table outlines the data collection instruments, participants and dates:

Table 2. *Data Collection Information*

Instrument	Participant(s)	Date
Observational Notes	Fran	March 16, 2017
Observational Notes	Maisha	March 16, 2017
Observational Notes	Angel	March 17, 2017
Observational Notes	Amirah	March 24, 2017
Focus Group	Angel, Amirah, Fran	May 10, 2017
Individual Interview	Angel	May 24, 2017
Individual Interview	Amirah	May 24, 2017
Individual Interview	Maisha	May 24, 2017
Individual Interview	Fran	May 26, 2017

After all qualitative data was collected, I transcribed the individual interviews and focus group. I then used open coding to identify themes or patterns in the qualitative data that was collected to address the research questions. I used a software called Atlas.ti (“Atlas.ti”, 2016) to assist me during this process. As a result of data analysis, the following four themes emerged: instructional strategies, classroom management skills, favorable mentor characteristics, mentor/mentee relationships, and program effectiveness. The following section of this chapter is organized by the themes that were identified and presents the findings that are aligned with the themes.

Instructional Strategies

Effective instructional strategies are a key component in the process of teaching and learning. Student achievement is impacted by the teacher’s instructional planning, instructional delivery, and the selection of diverse learning opportunities (Anderson, 1994). In each of the individual interviews, all of the participants mentioned they learned instructional strategies during the program that were helpful. Amirah stated, “I was given a lot of resources that I could use in the classroom. In one session, the mentor gave us games to use in the science classroom and that was very helpful.” Amirah expanded by describing the high level of engagement that her students experienced because she incorporated games in the classroom. She said, “My kids really had fun when I used the games to teach them about rocks.” Angel echoed Amirah’s sentiments as well in regard to receiving instructional strategies that were effective. “It was very helpful to plan with my mentor and he would give me the resources for the lessons and tell me the best way to teach it,” Angel stated. She explained that this was her first year teaching and often was unsure of the most effective way to teach the sixth grade Social Studies standards. Angel was also able to observe her mentor teach a lesson and shared that actually seeing him teach was very helpful as opposed to him telling her how to teach the lesson,

During Fran's individual interview, she mentioned observing her mentor teacher in action was very helpful. She stated, "I was able to see the strategies that she taught me in action and that helped a lot." As a participant in the new teacher mentor program, the mentees were required to observe their mentor and another veteran teacher of their choice during the first semester. The purpose of this activity was to observe the strategies that were discussed in the program sessions and also identify other effective instructional strategies that may be used. Research has shown that implementing peer observations can be viewed as a practice that provides professional development physically and intellectually in the individual's workplace (Gosling, 2005; as cited by Weller, 2009). Peer observations have been identified as an avenue that can improve teacher practice and performance (Bell, 2001). Maisha spoke about specific math instructional strategies that her mentor shared with her during one of their mentor/mentee discussions. She explained, "I was completely lost about how to teach the kids about proportions. I've heard that this can be very hard for students to get and I didn't want to make it worse by doing the wrong thing. Well my mentor was able to give me very helpful strategies to teach proportions." One of the benefits to having a mentor is the veteran teacher is able to share his/her experience with teaching specific concepts.

Classroom Management Skills

One of the topics in the new teacher mentor program addressed the importance of educators developing strong classroom management skills. During the focus group interview, participants were asked their perspective regarding the topics discussed in the new teacher mentor program sessions. All of the participants explained that each sessions was helpful. Angel stated, "I really enjoyed the session about building relationships with students. 'Dr. H' shared strategies that I could use to get to know my students." Building relationships is an important component of classroom management. Beaty-O'Ferrall, Green, & Hanna (2010) state, "Classroom management is critically important in the middle grades years when

students are more likely to experience declines in academic motivation and self-esteem.” There is an old saying in education that states, “They don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Research has shown that developing positive relationships with students helps create an environment that is conducive to learning. Bernstein (1997) conducted a study that examined the teacher student relationships of selected high school participants. The data revealed that students who developed a positive relationship with their teacher reported that they felt more comfortable to ask questions and take risks in class. Amirah also expressed that she learned about building relationships with students through the new teacher mentor program. “I learned different ways to build relationships with students through ‘Dr. H’s’ session. She talked about getting to know the students’ interests and likes and how building relationships will help with behavior in the classroom.” Amirah also provided examples of some of the suggestions that were given in the session, such as attending students’ extracurricular activities outside of school and including topics of students’ interests in the lessons.

Establishing rules and routines in the classroom is also imperative to effective classroom management skills. Wong (2000) states, “If classroom management procedures were taught, most all class discipline problems would disappear and more time in the classroom could be spent on learning.” Fran described her challenging experience with her 5th period class. She said that she personally struggled with classroom management and expressed that her mentor suggested revisiting the rules and routines that she established in her classroom. “My mentor said that I have to make sure I enforce the rules and routines in my classroom all the time.” Fran expressed that once she became more consistent in her routines, expectations, and consequences, she began to see a change in her classroom. “No, they weren’t perfect, but the two ladies that were giving me a lot of problems started to see that I meant business,” Fran voiced. As she was explaining this process of growth, Fran seemed confident and proud that she has this testimony to share.

Favorable Mentor Characteristics

Mentor selection is an important component of implementing a successful new teacher mentor program. Pogrund & Cowan (2013) suggest selecting veteran teachers who are deemed high quality mentors and are matched with a specific type of teacher that will foster a positive relationship. Building strong and positive relationships between the mentor and mentee is also important. Mentees may not be willing to take advice or confide in their mentor if the relationship isn't positive. This develops in the cultivation stage and not only career support is offered, but psychosocial support as well (Kram, 1983). When asked about the good qualities a mentor should have, the participants gave similar responses. Maisha explained that a good mentor is someone "who isn't afraid to speak their mind. Just someone who is open and honest about everything and not trying to hide or mask anything." She explained that her mentor was always very transparent with her. "My mentor would give me feedback on my ideas and lessons that I planned to teach. Sometimes the lessons were good and sometimes not so good. But I always appreciated the feedback." Trust and honesty are essential factors in a positive relationship between the mentor and mentee. Angel described good mentor qualities as "someone who is willing to help with whatever and whenever with their busy schedules. It's nice to have a mentor that you can go to when you need something and they will do whatever they can to help. They go up and beyond. That's what my mentor did."

Although, Maisha and Angel spoke about personal character traits in regard to qualities of a good mentor, Amirah and Fran focused more on the professional knowledge that their mentor possessed. "I think it's important for a mentor to have a lot of content and professional knowledge. One thing I can say about my mentor is that she knew her stuff!" Fran expressed. Selecting mentors that have professional experience and knowledge is beneficial in providing mentees with career support; a

mentoring function that is imperative in Kram's (1983) framework for mentoring. Amirah expressed, "I think a mentor should have at least 3 years of teaching experience and be in a teacher leader role to be a mentor. My mentor has been teaching over 10 years and is the Science Coordinator and I think that contributed to her being able to give me a lot of good suggestions and resources." Amirah also expressed that she really respects her mentor and has learned a great deal from her through observing her classroom and engaging in mentor/mentee discussions.

Mentor/Mentee Relationships

During the cultivation stage (as described in chapter two), the mentor begins to provide mentoring functions to the mentee. While career development activities depend upon the tenure of the mentor, psychosocial functions depend upon the amount of trust and friendship that is present in the relationship (Kram, 1983). Observational notes were taken of each mentor/mentee pair discussion meeting. The discussions were always held in the mentee's classroom and the length of the meeting varied. Each pair displayed body language that indicated there was a level of comfortability present.

Amirah and Mentor. Amirah and her mentor were sitting across from each other at two different tables. Amirah smiled and nodded quite often throughout the conversation. Expressions such as "Ok" and "Yes ma'am" and "Thank You" were used frequently by Amirah. Amirah is an African-American female in her 20s and this is her 2nd year of teaching. Her mentor is an African-American female in her 30s and is in her 14th year of teaching.

While Amirah and her mentor were discussing Amirah's frustration with lack of homework completion, Amirah still managed to find humor in the situation by making jokes. "I'm trying not to go crazy over these kids not doing their homework. I'm going to blame my weight gain on that!" Both Amirah and her mentor laughed and gave each other a high five. This may be used as evidence to support the assumption that a high level of comfort has developed between the two. After Amirah

expressed her frustration with several of her students not turning in daily homework, her mentor explained that homework doesn't have to be assigned every day. Her mentor stated, "Think about the purpose of the homework assignment. If you feel as though students are understanding the material, then they may not need that much additional practice as opposed to a concept that they are struggling with. Don't give busy homework. Make it purposeful." She also explained her homework process. The mentor showed Amirah a web-based tool called Edmodo to use in her classroom that helps students be accountable for homework.

Maisha and Mentor. Maisha and her mentor smiled and nodded quite often during the discussion. Both teachers were sitting in student desks right next to each other and seemed to be very comfortable with each other. Maisha is a Caucasian female in her 20s and her mentor is an African-American female in her 40s. Maisha is in her first year of teaching while her mentor is in her 17 year of teaching.

Maisha also laughed several times during her discussion with her mentor. This particular discussion was pretty positive and productive. Her mentee was able to show her an effective way to teach a concept that Maisha found quite challenging. She asked her mentor the best way to teach proportions in her class. Her mentor gave her two games to play. One was a hands-on activity using manipulatives and the other was a web-based game. Maisha stated "Thank you so much! I would've never thought to use this game!" She seemed pretty confident in her mentor's level of subject knowledge. Her mentor also reviewed the following week's lesson plan and shared how she would teach the particular concept. Maisha appeared to be very open with her mentor and accepted her suggestions.

Fran and Mentor. Fran and mentor were sitting right next to each other. Fran was nodding very frequently which may mean that she is agreeing with much of what her mentor was saying. The room was very crowded with many desks. The room was also much cluttered with several pieces of paper

trash on the floor. The lights were dim. Fran is a Caucasian female in her 40s and her mentor is an African American female in late 30s. Fran is in her 2nd year of teaching and her mentor is in her 11th year of teaching.

It seems that Fran was able to be very vulnerable and open with her mentor. She described a situation that appeared to be frustrating and challenging. Fran admitted that she was not having the best success with her fifth period and did not know what to do to turn it around. During this observation, it appeared as though Fran was able to be honest with herself and her mentor about her lack of solutions. This may demonstrate a level of trust that is present in the mentor/mentee relationship. She named two female students in particular who she states are very disrespectful to her. She said, “they are like the leaders in the class and they get everyone else off task.” Her mentor began asking her about the rules and procedures she implements in her classroom. Her mentor also asked about the consequences that are given. Fran admitted that she isn’t consistent with giving consequences. “I will threaten to call home or give silent lunch and then either I forget or something else happens.” Her mentor showed her a behavior management plan that she has used and also gave suggestions about specific procedures.

Fran seemed a little defeated about her 5th period class. Her mentor kept saying, “It’s going to be ok.” and “I understand.” By the end of the discussion, Fran seemed to feel better and even stated, “Thank you for listening and your help. Sometimes I just don’t know what to do.” Her mentor suggested that Fran observe one of her classes so that Fran can see how she has established rules, routines, and high behavior expectations for her students.

Angel and Mentor. Angel and her mentor sat at the same table right next to each other. Angel seemed very comfortable with her mentor while sitting in close proximity. She smiled and laughed during their conversation several times. The classroom was spacious and clean. There were science tables instead of desks and the tables were arranged to seat groups of four. Angel is a Caucasian female

in her 20s and is in her first year of teaching. Her mentor is an African American male who is in his 40s and is in his 13th year of teaching.

During their discussion, her mentor gave her Power Point files and hard copies of handouts to teach the physical features and environmental concerns of Canada. Her mentor also walked her through the instructional framework on the lesson plans, which included the activities that should take place during the Opening, Work Session, and Closing of the lesson. Angel expressed, “I have a problem of not getting to the Closing. I always run out of time.” Her mentor explained that it is always important for students to summarize what they’ve learned and emphasized using a timer to help with managing her time. Angel asked her mentor how long should the lesson take and was concerned about not allowing enough time for students to complete the lesson activities. Her mentor told her that it may take 2-3 days. Angel stated, “Thank you for these resources. Now I don’t have to make copies!” It is evident that Angel views her mentor as another mode of support and also a resource. Her mentor’s behavior has contributed to their positive relationship and has fostered an environment that allows the mentor to provide career support.

Program Effectiveness

Fran, Angel, and Amirah participated in a focus group and were asked questions regarding the effectiveness of the program. This include, but not limited to, their perceptions of the topic sessions, mentor support, and frequency of support. Maisha was unable to attend the focus group due to an unexpected illness. Each participant talked about how helpful the program was for their first year as a teacher at the school. Amirah stated,

“The program was very beneficial. Being new to the school and teaching, I sometimes wasn’t sure how to teach certain concepts in science and how to deal with disruptive students. But the sessions and my mentor helped me with that.”

Fran also echoed Amirah’s sentiments and said,

“I feel the program helped me a lot. Going to the sessions monthly helped me with classroom management and engagement. I was always able to go to my mentor for help or support. I was also able to go to other mentors in the program and I wouldn’t have felt comfortable doing this otherwise if I wasn’t part of the new teacher mentor program. For instance, I would often go to Angel’s mentor for help since he has taught seventh grade Social Studies before and I would also talk to him during the sessions.”

Angel explained, “I agree that the program was helpful. I learned a lot and got a lot of resources to help me.”

The participants seemed pleased with the session topics. When asked the question, “If you were designing this program, which topics would you change and how?” each participant said they would not change any of the topics. Fran expressed,

“I don’t feel the need to change the topics. I would add a topic on differentiation. I think this is an area where not only new teachers, but most teachers struggle with because there are so many different learning styles and levels in the classroom. It would also be helpful to have more sessions that go deeper into data and other things we have to do at the school. Also, observing other teachers in my PLC, not just observing my mentor teacher.”

Amirah also chimed in and stated, “I agree with Fran. Don’t change anything. I would just add a session on how to use data. My mentor and the Academic Coach had to help me a lot with my data log.” I asked

Amirah if she could expand on how a teacher leader might facilitate a session on the use of the data log. For example would it be more of a working session? Amirah answered, “Yes, it would be a working session but also the mentor could explain how we could use the information that we have to put on the data log.” Angel did not comment much about the topic sessions in the program. Her response was simple and to the point, “No, do not change anything. It was very helpful. I agree with Fran and Amirah.”

A common consensus among the three participants was that they felt the program should include more sessions during the second semester. The participants met a total of six times, four times in the first semester and two in the second semester. Although, each participant agreed the number of sessions for the first semester was appropriate, Fran suggested that the participants in the new teacher mentor program should meet more than once a month. I was shocked to hear, that with everything teachers have on their plate, new teachers would want to meet more than once a month. I replied, “You don’t feel as though that would be too much for new teachers?” All three participants answered, “No!” at the same time. Amirah stated, “I would have wanted to meet more than once a month. The sessions really helped me.” Fran suggested that a session regarding differentiation should be added to the program, while Amirah suggested a session regarding the use of student data should be added.

I then inquired about the level of experience for participants in the program and for how long. All teachers that are new to the school, regardless of experience, are expected to participate in the program for one year. However, Fran expressed that all new teachers should participate for one to two years. She also stated, “A teacher new to the school with less than five years should participate for one year to get acquainted with the staff and different grade levels.” Fran continued by suggesting the program be extended to new teachers who gain employment in the middle of the school year. Angel felt

as though new teachers should participate in the program for one year, possibly two or three depending upon their skill level. While Amirah felt one to two years was sufficient for participation.

I switched the focus of the discussion towards gathering information about the amount of time provided to meet with their mentor. I understand that allowing an appropriate amount of time for the participants to meet with their mentor was an important component of the program when it was initially designed. Therefore, I was interested in seeing if the new teachers felt as though the program met those expectations. The guidelines of the program stated that each mentee is expected to meet with their mentor at least once a month. Each participant agreed that there was sufficient time allotted to meet with their mentor and felt as though the discussions were helpful. Amirah conveyed that she met with her mentor on a weekly basis. She explained that initially she met with her mentor almost on a daily basis, informally. I began to inquire about the type of support that was given by their mentor. With Title I schools having unique challenges, I wanted to know if the participants felt as though they were given appropriate support that would help them perform their job efficiently at a Title I school. Fran and Amirah agreed that they were given appropriate support. Angel also agreed and expended upon her response by stating:

“I think it does. I came from teaching pre-school so I had no idea of what I was doing. I wasn’t used to having really low kids and really high kids all in the same class so one day I asked my mentor if he had the same issue and he said yes. So I asked him how he dealt with it. He gave me some helpful differentiation strategies. He even gave me the activities for a lesson that he had already differentiated by making tiered activities.”

Angel seemed grateful for this support as she was smiling as she described the scenario. Overall, the participants had very positive comments about the program and its components.

Discussion of Findings

This following section discusses the findings of the study and present any conclusions that were drawn from the data analysis as well as any literature reviewed to support the findings. This is organized by the study's research questions in order to give the audience an explicit response to each question. The study's tensions are also answered through an analysis of the data.

Research Question 1: How can the experiences of novice teachers be used to improve a new teacher mentor program in a local school?. To address research question 1, several responses from the focus group were used to get an understanding of the participants' perception. All of the teachers reported that the components of the program were effective and helpful. Fran gave a suggestion to add more sessions during the school year to offer more support to teachers. I was initially surprised about this suggestion given the fact that teachers have many responsibilities to tend to. When this was brought to the participants' attention, there was still an astounding consensus to add more sessions. While, literature suggests that teachers often feel as though there isn't enough time to complete all of their required tasks, this piece of data may infer that the participants felt as though the program sessions were meaningful and relevant and wanted more support. During the focus group, Fran also suggested to add a session regarding differentiation and how to implement this process in the classroom implicating that this concept was difficult for her. Therefore, it may be difficult for other new teachers as well. After conducting a review of literature, Nicolae (2014), found the major challenges that teachers face when engaging in differentiated instruction were lack of preparation time for lessons and activities, large class

sizes with varying abilities, heavy workloads for teachers, lack of resources, lack of teachers' skills to implement differentiation, and lack of teachers' motivation to implement differentiation (Nicolae, 2014).

Going deeper into using data was a topic that Fran suggested be added to the program sessions. Amirah agreed with Fran and expressed that she feels there needs to be a session regarding how to use data to make instructional decisions and a working session where teachers have time to complete their data log. The data log is an Excel spreadsheet that every teacher is required to maintain. The document consists of student demographic information, state assessment scores, and local school common assessment scores. Historically, teachers (novice and veterans) have complained about not having enough time to complete this mandatory task and have stated they do not see the relevance in maintaining this log. Adding a data/data log session to the program can help new teachers understand the purpose, learn how to use the information collected, and give them an opportunity to use the time to complete the log. I believe this improvement to the program would be productive and teachers would find it useful. Although, the aforementioned suggestions were given, all participants in the focus group agreed that the topic sessions were helpful; thus, addressing the tension question, "Do teachers feel as though the new teacher mentor program sessions were effective?"

Research Question 2: According to the perceptions of novice teachers, what does it mean to effectively implement a new teacher mentor program at a local school?. New teacher mentor programs are used as a means to provide intentional support to novice teachers in the field of education. A mentor is not the only source of support that was offered in this program. Participants were given the opportunity to attend specific topic sessions, engage in discussions with their mentors, and observe their mentor in action while visiting their classroom. Fran and Angel described how helpful it was to observe their mentor teach a lesson. Angel voiced that being able to see her mentor actually teach the content was more helpful than her mentor verbally telling her how to teach it. Angel and her mentor taught the

same grade level and subject. Therefore, she was able to observe an actual lesson that she would be teaching later on in the week. Implementing this component of the program proved to be helpful to some of the participants per they described their experiences as very positive. As a result of reflection upon this finding, a suggestion would be to develop a database that includes instructions on how to teach different topics using a variety of instructional strategies. Therefore, new teachers have a central location to access research-based resources.

All participants spoke about the benefits of having scheduled mentor/mentee discussions, addressing the tension question, “Do new teachers feel as though the scheduled discussions with their mentors are effective?” Additionally, Fran, Amirah, and Angel stated in the focus group that they had sufficient opportunity to meet with their mentors. While taking anecdotal observational notes, it was evident that all of the mentees felt comfortable with their mentors. Maisha sought professional advice about teaching specific concepts in math. She was open to her mentor’s suggestions which may imply that she trusted her professional judgement and knowledge. Angel also inquired about the most effective way to teach her content was given helpful resources and instructional strategies by her mentor. She appeared to be very grateful and was also very open to receiving her mentor’s advice and resources which may infer that she too trusts her mentor’s professional knowledge and understanding. This was a favorable mentor characteristic mentioned by both Fran and Amirah. Although, Maisha and Angel did not verbally state professional knowledge as a favorable mentor characteristic when asked, their interactions with their mentors contribute to the conclusion that they perceive this as an attribute their mentors possess. Including scheduled mentor/mentee discussions in the program created ample opportunities for the professional pair to engage in critical conversations, which may have aided in developing a positive relationship between the two. As a result, this opens the door for the mentor to not only provide career functions but also psychosocial support (Kram, 1983). It is highly likely that novice

teachers will experience challenges that may affect them emotionally and mentally. Having a mentor to confide in and discuss these challenges with, may help the mentee identify ways to cope and address these difficult experiences.

The high level of comfortability that was present between the mentor/mentee pairs may be a result of two reasons. One possibility is that the mentors may have displayed favorable characteristics such as compassion, subject knowledge, and professionalism, and therefore, have created an atmosphere of trust and respect. Another possibility is the ample amount of time in which mentees and mentors have spent with each other to build a bond that fostered a positive relationship that consist of comfort.

In attempt to provide additional support, the program offered topic sessions that were facilitated by the mentors and operated as professional learning sessions. The goal of the sessions was to enhance the novice teachers' professional skills by addressing topics that are commonly challenging for new teachers. As stated previously, all of the participants expressed that the sessions were helpful and even suggested adding more. This confirms that including topic sessions contributes to the overall effectiveness of implementing the program at the school.

A fourth component of the program required participants to observe their mentor in the classroom. This proved to be a beneficial process as mentees described how helpful it was to see their mentor "in action." Observing a proficient teacher in their classroom is professional learning at its best. Giving teachers the opportunity to observe other teachers provides a vehicle for job-embedded professional learning (Bell, 2001). Mentees were able to observe the instructional strategies and classroom management skills that were discussed in topic sessions as well as in mentor/mentee discussions. This process allowed the mentees the chance to learn about the strategies and skills verbally and then engage in learning again by visually experiencing the concepts. The mentees were then able to immediately apply these strategies and skills in their own classroom. Mitzel (2010) states, "Educators

benefit most by learning in the setting where they can immediately apply what they learn and in the school where they work.” Participants also gained new strategies and skills that were observed and may not have been discussed or presented previously. It is evident that this component also contributed to the successful implementation of the program because participants described positive experiences and deemed it as helpful.

Research Question 3: Are the teachers’ perceptions of the mentor program at the local school influencing its implementation? If so, how can we use them to improve the mentoring program?. Being aware of the teachers’ perceptions of the new teacher mentor program can be beneficial to the coordinator of the program as well as local school administrators. Implementing a program with fidelity is an essential factor in the success of the program. If participants have a negative opinion of the required activities in new teacher mentor program or do not consider the activities meaningful or valuable, then this could affect the implementation of the program. Patton, Parker, & Tannehill (2015) suggest teacher learning is relevant when it occurs in real work situations with students and addresses the specific needs of the school.

Each participant shared positive experiences in the program. Mentees praised the topics that were presented in the program sessions and voiced that many instructional strategies were shared. Knowing that teachers were pleased with the activities motivates leaders of the program to continue to engage the mentees with a high level of enthusiasm. During the program, mentees were required to maintain a discussion log to ensure that both the mentors and mentees were accountable for engaging in discussion, regularly. All participants found this component of the program to be very helpful. Amirah admitted that she met with her mentor more than once a month, informally and formally. Thus, inferring that mentor support was needed more than just once a month. Perhaps, adding more scheduled discussions will be a revision that is implemented

Although, the perceptions of the novice teachers' are positively influencing the implementation of the program, there may be other factors that are impacting its implementation. Literature suggests that mentors should receive professional development on how to be an effective mentor (Koki, 1999). A critical component of a successful mentor program is the competence of the mentors to provide a sufficient level of support (Koki, 1999). In this program, the mentors were selected based upon administrative recommendations; therefore, the coordinator of the program relied upon the mentors' successful experiences and knowledge to be used as support and advice for the mentees.

The findings of this study were used to make improvements to the current new teacher mentor program at the local school involved in the research. However, other local schools can use these findings to identify components that they may want to implement in their mentor program. School leaders with similar demographics may consider using the same components that have proven to be successful with this study. Yet, it is important to be mindful that although demographics may be similar, each school has its own unique contextual factors. Therefore, leaders must be aware of these factors in order to implement an effective program that will meet the needs of their teachers.

Summary

Investigating the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the implementation of the new teacher mentor program was the goal of this study. Individual interviews provided insight to the teachers' perceptions of the support that they received from their mentors. The participants described effective instructional strategies/resources and classroom management skills that were shared with them from their mentor. The mentor support given was described positively by all of the mentees and was described as being very helpful. Due to the fact that helpful instructional strategies and classroom management skills were mentioned several times by the participants, it is evident that these two coding themes were valued by the mentees.

The mentors' favorable characteristics were mentioned frequently as well. Each participant praised the mentors for being helpful and knowledgeable. Having this perception of their mentor may possibly have contributed to the positive relationship between the pair. My observational notes revealed a high level of comfort that was displayed by the mentee. In each pair's discussion observation, it was evident that the mentee was able to be open and receive the support that the mentor provided. According to the mentees' perception, not only were the mentors resourceful, but the program's activities proved to be helpful as well. An analysis of the data collected led to identified suggestions that can be used to improve the implementation of the program. This information will enlighten the school's administration of the effectiveness of the current implementation and any areas of possible improvement for future implementation. The following chapter will present the major findings of each case study and discuss the analysis of the cross-case.

Chapter 5: Cross-Case Analysis

"Research in the relationship between teacher attitudes and student performance attests to the pervading assumption that teacher attitudes have a definite impact on a students' learning and development" (Taddeo, 1977, p. 7). It is believed that teacher attitudes and beliefs are significant to the understanding of the success and failures of educational innovations, because their attitudes are deeply connected to the strategies that they use to promote teaching and learning (OECD, 2009). The relationship between teaching and learning is one in which researchers have studied to gain a better understanding of the impact it has on student achievement (OECD, 2009; Taddeo, 1977). Both researchers of this study sought to determine if the attitudes of teachers were hindering the success of teaching and learning through the use of social and emotional learning (SEL) and new teacher mentor (NTM) programs. The researchers conducting the two case studies are currently working as instructional coaches in urban title I school environments, and were interested in the function of teachers' attitudes. A multiple case study including two separate intrinsic cases was employed to determine if SEL and NTM programs were impacted by the teachers charged with implementing them. Prior to the collaborative study, each researcher worked independently to address SEL or NTM programs.

The next part of the chapter will provide a summary of the major findings from case study 1: Teachers' Perceptions on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning in a Southern Title I Elementary School; followed by a summary of the major findings from case study 2: Providing Support to New Teachers in a Dedicated Mentoring Program. The chapter will continue with a cross-case analysis of both studies, in addition to reflections of future work.

Case Study 1 Major Findings

Successful student achievement is currently comprised of academic skills and social skills (Martinsone, 2016). Schools today have the responsibility of educating the whole child, which increases

the school's role in "behavioral and emotion regulation, social awareness and communication" (Martinsone, 2016, p. 57). Due to the school's role being modified to include other elements, social and emotional learning programs have been developed, and are implemented with the purpose of increasing and improving students' social and emotional competencies (Martinsone, 2016; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). Although the schools have been charged with implementing this shift, it is ultimately the teachers' responsibility to ensure that all of the students' needs are met – both academic and social. Because teachers have a very large influence on how their students achieve, their attitudes may influence how the program is perceived, and may also impact the program's outcomes. This study provided an inquiry into teachers' perceptions and attitudes of implementing the SEL initiative; as well as explored the linkage between social and emotional learning and how students learn.

Aiming to explore the effects of teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of SEL, an intrinsic case study approach was employed using semi-structured interviews and observations to gain an understanding of the perceptions of five elementary teachers in an urban title I elementary school. The findings of this study were focused on responding to the research question driving this particular case:

- What do teachers perceive as both tools for support and challenges to success when implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) in a title I urban elementary school?

The findings were presented in accordance with the issues/tensions helping to address the complexity of the study, which are outlined below:

- Do teachers at LJS Elementary (pseudonym) see a relationship between social emotional competence and academic achievement?
- Is there an effective approach that can be used to manage organizational change during the adaption of SEL?

- Is there an effective method that can be used to prepare teachers to teach social and emotional learning?

The outcome of the study included seven key findings that addressed the research question along with the issues/tensions:

1. The analyzed data, presented in chapter 4, underscores that there is a relationship between social and emotional competence and academic achievement.
2. The participants in the study have addressed several challenges when implementing social and emotional learning in urban environments.
3. Managing organizational change during the adoption of SEL is a difficult process in certain school environments, yet it is attainable if the changes positively impact student outcomes.
4. The participants in the study agree on the idea that teachers must be properly trained on how to develop their students' social and emotional learning skills in order for the program to be effective.
5. There is a need to teach social and emotional skills within culturally relevant contexts.
6. Teachers' social and emotional competencies must be developed and supported in order to properly support students in SEL and improve student learning.
7. Social and emotional learning is not a cure all, and should be paired with other programs to ensure student success.

Determination of major findings. The key findings worked together to further illuminate the research question: What do teachers perceive as both tools for support and challenges to success when implementing social and emotional learning in a title I urban elementary school? While the teachers identified a positive relationship between social emotional competence and academic achievement, they have encountered several challenges when implementing social and emotional learning in an urban

environment. The main challenges included the lack of compassion, common knowledge, and collaborative skills contained by the students; as well as the lack of parental involvement.

One of the most challenging characteristics of education presently is the management of change (Fullan, 2002). However, the findings in this study illustrate that the management of organizational change during the adoption of SEL is difficult, yet attainable if the changes are beneficial for the students. Ms. Fox stated:

If the changes that are made can be, if I see evidence that the changes will work, then I have no problem with making changes at work. It's just when I see that it hasn't been well planned and well thought out, and I feel that there's not going to be a positive impact, those are the changes that I typically am reluctant to make. (May 9, 2017, lines 155-158)

Similarly, Ms. Brown commented:

Change for me, it's hard at times, because you get accustomed to doing things a certain way. But, once you set your mind to something and you analyze the situation and realize that it would be better for everyone that's involved, and then it would be a lot, you know, smoother for me to agree on change. But change in any situation is difficult at first. (April 28, 2017, lines 138-141)

Tom Roderick, a developer of many popular social and emotional learning programs, believes that teachers struggle with social and emotional learning because they have not been properly trained (Bouffard, 2014; Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014; Suttie, 2011). The participants in this study agree. They reported that they have received very little training on how to properly implement social and emotional learning. They participated in learning sessions where they have acquired knowledge about what social and emotional learning is, and how it applies to their life as adults, yet they did not learn how to pass it on to the students in order to help them grow as productive beings. When asked if they

have been prepared to teach social and emotional learning, Ms. Fox responded, “I’ve received some training, but I think more training is needed. It hasn’t been extensive. It’s been surface. This is how you implement the program, but not in depth training” (May 9, 2017, lines 57-58). Dr. Jones stated:

Yes, they did do some types of workshops but I do believe that there needs to be a more in depth training. Their training was at like a beginner level, but now that we have begun, where do we go from here. (April 27, 2017, lines 49-51)

Ms. Brown and Ms. Stephens answered similarly to Ms. Fox and Dr. Jones. They both answered yes, they have been trained, but believe that more extensive training needs to follow the initial training. Mr. Walker, on the other hand, answered, “No, not at all” (May 17, 2017, line 43), when asked had he been prepared to teach social and emotional learning. He further explained:

I guess they call those meetings that we had training, but they were not. I mean, I learned a lot about SEL itself and how it applies to my life, and why it is important, but I was not trained on how to teach to my students or how to fit it in my schedule. No, no, not at all. (May 17, 2017, lines 43-45)

Although believing that a relationship exists between social and emotional competence and academic achievement, the participants continued to question whether or not SEL would work for their students. Dr. Jones revealed:

Well, I think that people who implement, or who started social and emotional learning really thought that it would work for all children, and it does not work for all children. It just depends on the child itself. Some children, with fewer issues, they will do fine with SEL, but there are some children who need something more than SEL, and it’s hard when we have to try to keep everyone inside of a bubble that they do not fit in. (April 27, 2017, lines 64-68)

Mr. Walker shared a similar concern. He stated:

It just doesn't work with all of the kids. Like I said earlier, I have about four kids that SEL is just not working for. It just doesn't get to them. I'm trying to help them, but, I won't say that they're so far gone, but they're just, I don't know, the streets may have them I would say, and unfortunately, SEL doesn't work in the streets. (May 17, 2017, lines 62-65)

This also speaks to the perceptions of challenges of the participants when implementing SEL in a title I urban elementary school.

As the participants shared a day in their lives as teachers, it was apparent that their days were filled with perfunctory tasks that they do automatically and without being present. They do not have time for personal reflection, or any interpersonal conversations outside of work. This type of lifestyle leads teachers down the path to burnout, and is most likely caused by teachers' lack of social and emotional skills (Zakrzewski, 2013).

In order to support students in SEL and improve student learning, teachers should possess strong social and emotional competencies (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). Because the teachers in this study do not possess these competencies, they must be built through "coaching and other forms of support" as a means of serving as models for their students (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013, p. 62). While serving as models happen inevitably, teachers are not always equipped to handle all of their students' affairs. As the participants spoke about moments of sadness in their careers as teachers, many of them spoke of obstacles that their students are faced with. During these obstacles, it seemed that not even SEL could help. Ms. Brown shared:

Yes. I had a student, just last year, who is faced with all type of obstacles that are in her paths, in her way. She, has a very difficult home life and it rolls over into school on a daily basis. She's

having a hard time adjusting to the SEL implementation. She, is basically in a field all on her own. It's hard for her to adapt to rules and procedures that are put in place at school because she doesn't have that same stability at home. She's very aggressive. She is physically violent and verbally abusive. And, with SEL, I just can't really see that really helping a child in that type of environment or setting. (April 28, 2017, lines 109-115)

Similarly, Ms. Stephens expressed:

Sad...I've had a lot of sad moments, but I'll speak on one. Sad is not being able to help a student that you know they're in a situation that you know is not in their control. One in particular is a student that I have, they're moving from place to place, and I look at the background information of that student, and that student has been to several schools throughout their elementary school years, and currently still bouncing around from house to house, and not able to bring up grades, and just, scores are not on grade level and that's sad being that I know that the student is trying, but have circumstances that they can't control. And this is where I feel like SEL is not a tool that could help all students. Because all students don't deal with stuff like this. All students don't have these types of issues. But for the ones that do, SEL doesn't tell them how to cope with real life issues. (May 9, 2017, lines 96-102)

The other participants' thoughts about the limitations of SEL are similar to Ms. Brown's and Ms. Stephens'. There are several issues that burden students in urban environments. As a result, there may be several remedies to assist with solving all of their issues. Other resources may need to be utilized in conjunction with SEL in order for its impact to extend to all students. As the teachers have reported, social and emotional learning is useful and should be used as a tool for students in urban environments. However, it may need to accompany other innovations that have also been proven to be effective.

Overall, the findings revealed enhanced growth in the students who were involved in social and emotional learning. However, these improvements were not consistent for all students. The conducted study did not reveal a clear impact of teachers' attitudes alone affecting the implementation of SEL – mainly because the teachers' perceptions of the program itself were positive; however, the study presented a number of other concerns that prevented the teachers from fully believing that SEL can be successful in title I urban environments.

Case Study 2 Major Findings

In this case study, I explored the perceptions of novice teachers who were participating in a year-long new teacher mentor program. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and use the findings to make revisions to the program to improve the effectiveness of its implementation. The following research questions were used to guide the examination of the study:

1. How can the experiences of novice teachers be used to improve a new teacher mentor program in a local school?
2. According to the perceptions of novice teachers, what does it mean to effectively implement a new teacher mentor program at a local school?
3. Are the teachers' perceptions of the mentor program at a local school influencing its implementation? If so, how can we use them to improve the mentoring program?

One major finding of this study is all of the teachers reported that the components of the program were effective and helpful. Participants in the program were assigned a mentor, required to attend topic sessions, engaged in scheduled mentor/mentee discussions, and observed their mentor teach at least one lesson. The participants even suggested to add more sessions during the school year to offer more support to teachers. This was surprising because in my years of education I have often experienced

teachers voicing their concerns about not having enough time to complete all of their responsibilities and expectations from administration. The desire for more topic sessions support the conclusion that the participants felt as though the program sessions were meaningful and relevant and wanted more support throughout the year.

During the analysis of the data, I also found that participants perceived the scheduled mentor/mentee discussions to be very helpful and were pleased that they had ample time to meet with their mentor. Participants shared that the discussions helped them by receiving advice about classroom management skills and instructional strategies. Observational notes revealed the mentees seemed very comfortable with their mentors, suggesting they have had a sufficient amount of time to develop a positive bond. For example, during a discussion between Amirah and her mentor, she joked about her struggles with her students completing homework and there was even a “high-five” exchange between the pair. Fran was able to voice her concerns about her challenging fifth period class with her mentor. She explained that she is at a loss of how to address the difficult behaviors in her classroom and asked her mentor for advice. This observation appears to support the finding that Fran felt a high level of comfortability with her mentor to admit that she is having a problem with classroom management. A possible reason for comfort being present is that the mentors may possess favorable characteristics that contribute to a positive relationship such as compassion, subject knowledge, and professionalism. As a result, mentors are able to provide not only career support but psychosocial support as well (Kram, 1983).

The overall perceptions of the novice teachers were very positive. All participants praised all four components of the program: mentor support, topic sessions, mentor/mentee discussions, and peer observations. Participants even voiced that they would like more support offered on a more consistent basis. On that basis, the perceptions of the new teachers are not hindering the implementation of the

program. The program is not seen as irrelevant or “something else we have to do.” Instead, it is viewed as a valued resource that has help improve the participants’ pedagogical skills and professional knowledge.

However, there are other components of the program that were not explored during this study, which may hinder the program’s implementation. For example, the mentors that were selected to participate in the program did not receive any professional development. Therefore, without a formal mentor evaluation protocol, it is difficult to assess if the mentors’ performance met the program coordinator’s expectations. Although, each participant expressed positive experiences with their mentor, the mentees’ expectations may not have aligned with the coordinator’s or administration’s expectations.

In summary, the key findings from this study are:

1. Participants viewed the scheduled mentor/mentee discussion as helpful.
2. Mentor observations were effective and perceived as a valuable experience.
3. Topic sessions were relevant and viewed in a positive manner; however, participants would like more sessions scheduled throughout the duration of the program.
4. Novice teachers expressed they received a sufficient amount of mentor support.

The study’s findings have illuminated the research questions that have guided the examination of the novice teachers’ perceptions. The data has revealed that the implementation of the program is viewed as effective. Therefore, the coordinator should continue to implement the current components of the program. Although, positive views were recorded, the participants did voice a desire to engage in more topic sessions more frequently; thus, alluding to the conclusion that the topic sessions were helpful.

Cross-Case Analysis

According to Cruzes, Dyba, Runeson, & Host (2015), cross-case analysis “is a method that facilitates the comparison of commonalities and differences in the events, activities, and processes; the units of analyses in case studies” (p. 6). In this section, we share our interpretations of the data found in our joint collaborative study. The data presented here emerged through the discourse with nine participants that oftentimes responded to the overall question driving the multiple case study:

- Are teachers’ attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning?

Prior to the joint collaborative study, both researchers conducted independent case studies with completely different research questions. Case study 1 explored the concept of learning through the implementation of social and emotional learning, while case study 2 examined the concept of teaching through the implementation of new teacher mentor programs. Although, the independent intrinsic case studies were different, the researchers conducted a cross-case analysis to identify the similarities that address the aforementioned overarching research question.

Are teachers’ attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning?

In response to our overall research question, our participant interviews, focus groups, and observation data revealed that teachers' attitudes alone are not hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning. In case study 1, all of the participants agreed that SEL has the ability to transform school culture and academic success. Ms. Brown commented that social and emotional learning “teaches the kids how to show empathy for one another, and it builds community within the classroom; which basically helps them with working together, and achieving their goals that

they set for themselves throughout the day” (April 28, 2017, lines 26-28). Dr. Jones also attributes the progressive changes that she has seen in her students’ behavior and academics to social and emotional learning:

With the implementation of SEL, I have seen a change in some of my students’ behavior, as well as their academics. I know that if we continue with SEL, and we do it the right way, our students could really thrive. The culture that our students are accustomed to is toxic. They don’t know how to get along with one another or communicate appropriately with one another. They talk mean to each other, and can’t really express themselves, because they’ve never been taught how to. I know that SEL can help them to learn how to change their culture, and their ways of thinking. (April 27, 2017, lines 27-33)

In case study 2, participants shared positive comments about their experience in the new teacher mentor program. Fran stated,

I feel the program helped me a lot. Going to the sessions monthly helped me with classroom management and engagement. I was always able to go to my mentor for help or support. I was also able to go to other mentors in the program and I wouldn’t have felt comfortable doing this otherwise if I wasn’t part of the new teacher mentor program. For instance, I would often go to Angel’s mentor for help since he has taught seventh grade Social Studies before and I would also talk to him during the sessions. I think you should extend this opportunity to the teachers that may get hired in the middle of the year (May 10, 2017, lines 62-68).

Amirah also expressed similar sentiments by saying, “This program is very beneficial. Being new to the school and teaching, I sometimes wasn’t sure how to teach certain concepts in Science and how to deal with disruptive students. But the sessions and my mentor helped me with that” (May 10, 2017, lines 58-

60). However, a host of other concerns significantly impact the outcomes of those educational innovations. In the following discussion, we explain how the findings from each of our intrinsic case studies have influenced the cross-case's major findings found below:

1. Teachers' positive attitudes are not hindering the success of educational innovations for teaching and learning.
2. Teacher training may affect the success of educational innovations for teaching and learning.
3. Unique contextual factors in urban title I schools impact teachers' attitudes toward educational innovations for teaching and learning.

Major finding 1: Teachers' attitudes are not hindering the success of educational innovations for teaching and learning. The word attitude is oftentimes referenced as negative (Lautzenheiser, 2017). When an attitude is discussed, "it is generally interpreted as a description of a less-than-favorable disposition displayed by the individual-in-question" (Lautzenheiser, 2017, para. 2). However, the reality is that all individuals have attitudes. The key is to determine what type of attitude is exhibited (Lautzenheiser, 2017). In both case studies, the researchers found that teachers displayed positive attitudes toward social and emotional learning programs, as well as new teacher mentoring programs; therefore, concluding that their attitudes were not hindering the success of either program as evidenced in the section above, as well the table below (*See Table 3*). The table displays the number of positive terms used to describe both SEL and NTM programs, and the number of times they were used.

Table 3: *Terms and Iterations that Support Participants' Positive Attitudes*

Terms	<i>Iterations</i>
Helpful	43
Effective	27
Beneficial	21

Teachers whom implemented SEL believed that the program can transform school culture and academic success. The participants had observed the improvements made by the students at LJS Elementary since being involved in social and emotional learning. The SEL program has had positive effects on the students' attitudes toward self, as well as their social behaviors. Novice teachers whom engaged in a new teacher mentor program praised the program components for offering sufficient support and provided the opportunity to enhance their professional skills.

At the present time, educational innovations adopted by different schools and districts are excessive, and vary quickly from one program to another (Ferriter, 2013). Because of this, teachers do not usually buy into the programs – they just wait for the next program to begin and replace the current one. However, social and emotional learning, and new teacher mentor programs have proven to not follow this same trend. According to the data collected in this study, the teachers have bought-in and are experiencing benefits. This finding aligns with the ideas posed by Ferriter who states that "teachers buy into change efforts that they believe are important" (2013, para. 4). Teachers must realize a need for program implementation, and must believe in the common goal of the program in order for them to display positive attitudes toward the program. As evidenced by *Table 3*, the teachers involved in this multiple case study display positive attitudes towards both SEL and NTM programs.

Major finding 2: Teacher training may affect the success of educational innovations for teaching and learning. When deciding to implement new educational innovations or initiatives, leaders must identify a plan of support for all individuals who are expected to implement the program. Bennet states, "Deep change demands the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for teachers, and transformative learning that affects their beliefs about teaching and learning (Bennet, 2007, p. 18). A key factor in failed educational programs is the lack of sufficient support that is given to teachers; this includes professional development that teaches the individuals how to effectively implement the

innovation or initiative. In case study 1, participants expressed the need for more training on how to implement the components of SEL. For instance, one of the participants stated, “I’ve received some training, but I think more training is needed. It hasn’t been extensive. It’s been surface. This is how you implement the program, but not in-depth training” (May 9, 2017, lines 57-58).

The topic sessions that were included in the new teacher mentor program were used as professional learning opportunities for the participants in case study 2. Participants expressed that the topic sessions were helpful but suggested providing more opportunities for professional development. Fran stated,

I don’t feel the need to change the topics. I would add a topic on differentiation. I think this is an area where not only new teachers, but most teachers struggle with because there are so many different learning styles and levels in the classroom. It would also be helpful to have more sessions that go deeper into data and other things we have to do at the school (May 10, 2017, lines 10-12)

Amirah also voiced that she was pleased with the topic sessions but would also add a session regarding how to effectively use data to make instructional decisions. In both case studies, participants expressed the need for more professional learning experiences. Initial and introductory training alone is not enough. Teachers need a sufficient amount of professional learning to sustain the strategies and skills that are being learned (Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, & Merrell, 2009). In addition, professional learning should be differentiated to meet the specific needs of teachers to build teacher confidence and guarantee the fulfillment of the program. Providing more opportunities for new teachers to engage in professional development creates an avenue for a change in teacher practice and beliefs; thus, helping teachers learn more effective strategies to implement to address daily challenges (Mizell, 2010, p. 6). Professional learning opportunities regarding topics such as building positive relationships with students, classroom

management, integrating technology effectively in the classroom, and using student data to make instructional decisions can help teachers address those daily challenges.

Major finding 3: Unique contextual factors in urban title I schools impact teachers' attitudes toward educational innovations for teaching and learning. "It is important to note that the challenges facing urban schools are not entirely unique to specific areas, nor are all urban schools confronted with the same challenges" (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, & Nogura, 2011, para. 3). This is also true for title I schools. Urban title I schools "do, however, share some unique physical and demographic characteristics that differentiate them from suburban and rural schools" (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, & Nogura, 2011, para. 3). As evidenced by our research, the participants' implementing social and emotional learning experienced more challenges than the participants' implementing the new teacher mentor program – although they all were in urban title I school environments. As reported by one of the participants in case study 1 who has worked in urban environments for over twenty years, “this school environment is one of strong critique, and it plays a part in my ability to be able to change” (May 9, 2017, lines 160-161). She, as well as other participants, did not speak on the typical challenges that all urban environments face, yet a focus was placed on the specific challenges involving LJS Elementary School – which speaks to the culture of the school environment.

The new teacher mentor program focused on the teachers who are receiving support in order to assist with their transition into a lifelong, successful career in teaching. Participants in case study 2 reported the support received from the new teacher mentor program was sufficient in helping them address common challenges that are seen in Title I schools. For example, Angel stated,

I came from teaching pre-school so I had no idea of what I was doing. I wasn't used to having really low kids and really high kids all in the same class so one day I asked my mentor if he had

the same issue and he said yes. So I asked him how he dealt with it. He gave me some helpful differentiation strategies. He even gave me the activities for a lesson that he had already differentiated by making tiered activities. (May 10, 2017, lines 52-56)

The participants in case study 1 expressed a concern with implementing SEL with fidelity due to the unique contextual factor of the school environment. On the contrary, the participants in case study 2 felt as though the NTM program could be implemented effectively due to the contextual factors of their school environment. While both school environments are deemed as title I, they are both very different. One environment was viewed as one in which it is difficult to implement change, while the other was viewed as the opposite. On that account, contextual factors, or environments, can affect teachers' attitudes toward implementing educational innovative programs as evidenced by the participants' experiences in our study.

Reflection of Future Work

Case study 1. Thus far, limited research exists examining the implementation of social and emotional learning in urban, title I elementary school environments (Yoder, 2014). By completing this study in an environment such as this, it allowed me the opportunity to uncover distinctive challenges faced by the teachers charged with the implementation of SEL and discover if their attitudes toward the program impacted its outcomes. While this study offered a comprehensive stance of the participants' experiences with social and emotional learning, only five participants were examined, and they were all stationed at one site. An analysis of a larger number of teachers in diverse urban, title I settings would provide more evidence of the supports and challenges encountered when implementing SEL; as well as the program's impact on student learning.

In order to improve social and emotional learning at LJS Elementary School, the parents must be included so that students are supported at school and at home (Durlak, Weissberg, Taylor, Dymnick, & Schellinger, 2008) Because the students are regularly engulfed in stressful situations outside of school, it is dire that the individuals outside of school are aware of the strategies that the students are being taught in order to cope with those stressful situations. The social and emotional learning curricula must also be revised to include more activities culturally relevant to students in urban environments. The topics covered in the Second Step program are inclusive of the five social and emotional competencies that all students must learn in order to effectively deal with daily tasks and challenges. However, those tasks and challenges differ in different communities. Perhaps the scenarios can be altered to include types of issues encountered by students at LJS Elementary School. The teachers are also in need of ongoing training in SEL that explicitly teaches them how to implement SEL components such as class meetings, student self-management, and student collaboration. Social and emotional learning training for teachers is essential, and directly aligned to student success. With proper training, teachers will be able to effectively implement SEL strategies, and use the selected SEL program to create positive learning environments (Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014).

During this study, the participants wrote narratives to describe a day in their life as a teacher. The narratives provided powerful data, as well as an insight to the participants' personal struggles with SEL. Future research could include the voices of the students, written by students involved in social and emotional learning, to compare the lives of the teachers to the lives of the students, in addition to enrich the understanding of this particular phenomenon. Based on the data gathered from the teachers' narratives alone, I am sure that the students' narratives would be just as eye-opening. It would be interesting and profound to note if there is a strong complement between the teachers' lives and students'

lives. If not, it would be detrimental to uncover biases held by the teachers, and teach them how to be culturally relevant teachers in this environment.

Case study 2. Although I was able to gather sufficient data by examining the mentees' perceptions through individual interviews, a focus group, and observational notes to address the research questions, I would recommend expanding the study to exploring the perceptions of the mentors as well. It is just as pertinent to be aware of how the mentors view the effectiveness of the implementation of the program per their perception could affect the success of the program. If mentors do not feel as though their work is valued or they are not given adequate time to support their mentee, then there may be a lack of fidelity in regard to implementation. Mentors could give a perspective that can be used to improve the structure of the program; thus, possibly yielding a higher level of effectiveness.

Another recommendation for future work is to include a larger sample of participants in order to gain a broader view of the type of support that mentees' feel is needed for novice teachers. This being said, I would seek participation from the surrounding schools with similar demographics as the initial study site. The criteria for sampling would remain the same, however, the study would now examine novice teachers' perceptions of different new teacher mentor programs at different local schools. The research could take a multi-case study approach and continue with a cross-case analysis. The findings from this study can inform each individual local school about the effectiveness of the implementation of their program and give a broader perspective about specific components of new teacher mentor programs that novice teachers find helpful.

In regard to recommendations for improving the new teacher mentor program, I would suggest providing professional development for the selected mentors. The coordinator of the program could provide professional development or identify an organization/consultant to provide professional development to the mentors. The training should be focused on how to teach the mentors to coach the

new teachers. Research suggests that developing mentorship skills amongst veteran teachers will equip them with the necessary skills to provide adequate support to novice teachers (Whitebook & Bellm, 2014). Mentors should assess their own competence in the areas of relationship building content knowledge (Whitebook & Bellm, 2014). Being a master teacher isn't the only characteristic that is needed to be an effective mentor. Therefore, programs should adopt a research-based model or framework as a guide to develop proficient mentors; thus, providing the program coordinator with specific criteria and a clear understanding of the skills needed to become an effective mentor.

Leaders should also consider identifying criteria for mentor selection. At the site of study, mentors were selected based upon administrator referral. If administrators deemed the individual as a "good teacher" with a "good attitude," then he/she was recommended to be a mentor. However, studies suggest that mentor criteria should be based upon several factors such as knowledge, communication skills, years of experience, and a personable disposition, but are not limited to these characteristics (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011; Maria-Monica & Alina, 2013; Pogrund & Cowan, 2013).

I was surprised to find that there were not any negative perceptions from any of the participants. Although, the participants suggested to increase the amount of sessions that mentees and mentors are expected to attend, this suggestion was given in a very positive manner. As to suggest that the sessions were helpful and that they needed more. I believe the absence of any negative findings may be due to the fact that I play two roles in this study. I am not only the researcher, but the coordinator of the program as well. Therefore, participants may not feel as though they can be completely open with me about their concerns. There may have been a barrier of openness with me as an attempt to not upset me by voicing negative comments about the program. As a recommendation for future work, I would suggest the data collection be conducted by someone who is not directly involved with the development, coordination, or monitoring of the program.

Conclusion

Exploring teachers' attitudes towards educational innovations for teaching and learning provides insight to the success of program implementation. An essential factor of the program's success is based upon the teachers' commitment to implement its components with fidelity. Therefore, program value and teacher buy-in are imperative. As we sought to examine the teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of educational innovations, we found that other factors, outside of teachers' attitudes, impact the ideas of teaching and learning. Both the social and emotional learning, and new teacher mentor programs have findings that demonstrate their success. This study provides additional data that validates previous findings. This study further finds that specific school needs in urban title I schools may impact teachers' attitude in regard to state, district, or local school mandated programs. Although their attitudes regarding the programs are positive, we are aware that professional development for teachers plays an important role in equipping teachers with the required skills to implement strategies and resources with fidelity. Therefore, planning and executing a plan for professional development is needed to support implementation.

Teachers engaged in using SEL may need professional development with implementing required components of the program. This would require teachers to receive ongoing support addressing class meetings, student relationship building, and student affirmations. The professional learning would be specific to showing teachers how to implement the aforementioned components. Receiving professional learning on implementation can aid teachers in engaging in the program with fidelity.

As stated earlier, teachers would engage in several opportunities for professional development as a result of being a participant in the new teacher mentor program. Instead of meeting once a month for

specific sessions, the participants would need to meet at least bi-weekly for continued support. We hope that this study offers insights into how to further assist teachers in urban title I schools as they seek to positively impact teaching and learning.

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Appendix A

Social Emotional Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol Interview # _____

Date ____/____/____

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Tiana Holmes and I am a graduate student at Kennesaw State University conducting a research project for my course on Advanced Qualitative research methods. This interview session will take about 60-90 minutes and will include 31 questions regarding your life and any key experiences you wish to focus on. One of the questions will require you to write your answer. I would like your permission to audio record this interview so that I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know and we will stop. All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for class and educational purposes.

At this time I would like to ask for your verbal consent and also inform you that your participation in this interview also implies your consent. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

Interview Questions – Topic Related

1. Do you have any experience with implementing social emotional learning outside of your current school?
2. Can social emotional learning transform school culture and academic success? Why or why not?
3. Would it be more challenging to use social emotional learning to transform culture and academic success at a school in an urban environment? Why or why not?
4. If you previously identified challenges, will social emotional learning help make those challenges easier?
5. Do you see yourself working in an urban environment until you retire? Why or why not?
6. Have you been prepared to teach social emotional learning?
7. Do you value the SEL training that you have received?
8. Is the SEL training that you are involved in aligned with the outcomes that you would like for your students to achieve?
9. What supports are in place to ensure the effectiveness of the SEL program?
10. What challenges do you face solely with the implementation of SEL?
11. Do you see any benefits with incorporating SEL in an urban elementary school?
12. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being high, how would you rate your current implementation of SEL? Please illustrate your answer with examples.
13. Would you describe the environment that you currently work in as challenging?
14. If so, what makes it challenging?
15. How many years have you been teaching?
16. Have you always worked in urban environments?
17. If not, how do you think urban environments differ from other school environments?
18. What grade level do you teach?
19. What subject areas do you teach?

20. How many years have you been teaching at Dobbs Elementary?
21. Tell me about an experience as a teacher that saddened you.
22. Tell me about an experience as a teacher that made you happy that you decided to teach.
23. Is your current work as a teacher preparing your students for future success?
24. Do you have any experience with educational reforms?
25. How do you feel about educational reforms?
26. How do you feel about implementing changes in your personal life? For example, if you had to move abruptly, how would you feel?
27. How do you feel about implementing changes at work?
28. Does the environment play a role in your feelings regarding change?
29. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being high, how important is teacher buy-in when implementing a change?
30. Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else that you would like to share?

Part II

1. Reconstruct a day in your life as a teacher from the time that you awake until you fall asleep. Please take as much time as you need to write the answer to this prompt.

Appendix B

Observation Protocol Social Emotional Learning – Classroom Observation

This protocol is designed to provide the researcher with a method for conducting classroom observations.

Observation Tools

The researcher will use both Observation Tools to complete the observation. Tool I should be used to script and make notes of the events occurring in the classroom. Tool II should be used to notate the practices associated with Social Emotional Learning. Tool I should be completed during the observation, and used to complete Tool II. Both tools should be completed entirely so that the researcher is able to reconstruct the observation from the notes taken. A video-camera may also be used during the observation.

Tool I – Selective Scripting Observation Tool

Selective Scripting can be used to collect information about:

- what the teacher emphasizes positively and negatively
- how the teacher expresses expectations of students
- how the teacher communicates with the students
- how the teacher gives directions to the students (who follows directions, and who does not)
- what kind of questions were asked and how were they answered
- wait time
- how the content is presented
- how the students respond

Tool II – Social Emotional Learning Observation Tool

Inventory of practices for promoting children's social emotional competence. (n.d.). *The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning*. Retrieved from <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module1/handout4.pdf>

The Social Emotional Learning Observation Tool should be used to encourage reflection and discussion. Use of this tool will equip the researcher with information regarding the implementation of SEL – effective or ineffective.

Both Observation Tools are attached.

Time allotted

30 minutes per observation session

Reflection Questions

- Did most students demonstrate positive social and emotional behaviors?

- Did the teachers demonstrate skills and competencies to support social and emotional development?
- What kind of support might the teachers need to better implement social emotional learning?

Selective Scripting Observation Tool I

Observer: _____ Participant: _____
 Observational Time: ____ to ____ Location: _____ Date: _____

Time	Teacher	Students
Please include a Graphical Representation of the Observed Classroom		

Appendix C

Social Emotional Learning Observation Tool – Tool II

Observer: _____

Participant: _____

Observational Time: _____ to _____

Location: _____

Date: _____

Summary of Event Taking Place:

Building Positive Relationships

Skills and Indicators	YES	NO	Not Observed	Observations/Evidence/ Gestures/ Social Interactions	Reflection Notes/Comments
1. Develops meaningful relationships with children and families					
▪ Greets children on arrival; calls by name					
▪ Communicates with children at eye level					
▪ Verbally interacts with individual children during routines and activities					
▪ Shows respect, consideration, warmth to all children					
▪ Speaks calmly to children					
▪ Uses a variety of strategies for building relationships with all families					
▪ Attends to children in positive ways at times when the children are not engaging in challenging behavior					
▪ Uses a variety of strategies for building relationships with all families					
▪ Creates a classroom that is a place that children and families like to be (i.e. feel comfortable, welcomed, and safe)					

Designing Supportive Environments

Skills and Indicators	YES	NO	Not Observed	Observations/Evidence/ Gestures/ Social Interactions	Reflection Notes/Comments
2. Designs the physical environment					
▪ Arranges traffic patterns in classroom so there are no wide open spaces					
▪ Removes obstacles that make it difficult for children with physical disabilities to move around the room					
▪ Clearly defines boundaries in learning centers					
▪ Arranges learning centers to allow room for multiple children					
▪ Provides a variety of materials in all learning centers					
▪ Designs learning centers so that children spend time evenly across centers					
▪ Considers children's interests when deciding what to put in learning centers					
▪ Makes changes and additions to learning centers on a regular basis					
▪ Visually closes learning centers when they are not an option for children to use					
3. Develops schedules and routines					
▪ Designs schedule to include a balance of large group and small group activities					
▪ Designs schedule to minimize the amount of time children spend making transitions between activities					
▪ Implements schedule consistently					
▪ Teaches children about the schedule					
▪ Provides explanations when changes in the schedule are necessary					
4. Ensures smooth transitions					
▪ Structures transitions so children do not have to spend excessive time waiting with nothing to do					
▪ Teaches children the expectations associated with transitions					
▪ Provides warnings to children prior to transitions					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualizes the warnings prior to transitions so that all children understand them 					
5. Designs activities to promote engagement					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans and conducts large group activities with specific goals in mind for the children 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varies the topics and activities in the large group from day to day 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunities for children to be actively involved in large group activities 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varies speech and intonation to maintain the children's interests in the large group activity 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitors children's behavior and modifies plans when children lose interest in large group activities 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans and conducts small group activities with specific goals in mind for each child 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans and conducts fun small group activities 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses peers as models during small group activities 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitors children's behavior and modifies plans when children lose interest in small group activities 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes adaptations and modifications to ensure that all children can be involved in a meaningful way in any activity 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a variety of ways to teach the expectations of specific activities so that all children understand them 					
6. Giving Directions					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gains child's attention before giving directions 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimizes the number of directions 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualizes the way directions are given 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives clear directions 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives directions that are positive 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives children time to respond to directions 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives children choices and options when appropriate 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows through with positive acknowledgements of children's behavior 					
7. Establishes and enforces clear rules, limits, and consequences for behavior					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies appropriate classroom rules with children 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaches rules in developmentally appropriate ways 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides opportunities for children to practice classroom rules 					

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ States rules positively and specifically (avoids words “no” and “don’t” as much as possible)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Keeps rules to a manageable number					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Frequently reinforces children for appropriate behavior					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Identifies consequences for both following and not following rules					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Makes sure all adults in classroom know rules and consequences					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enforces rules and consequences consistently and fairly					
8. Engages in ongoing monitoring and positive attention					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gives children time and attention when engaging in appropriate behavior					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Monitors adults' interactions with children throughout the day					
9. Uses positive feedback and encouragement					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Uses positive feedback and encouragement contingent on appropriate behavior					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provides descriptive feedback and encouragement					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Conveys enthusiasm while giving positive feedback and encouragement					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Uses positive feedback and encouragement contingent on child's efforts					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provides nonverbal cues of appreciation					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Recognizes that there are individual variations in what forms of acknowledgement are interpreted as positive by children					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Involves other adults in acknowledging children					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Models positive feedback and encouragement frequently					

Social Emotional Teaching Strategies

Skills and Indicators	YES	NO	Not Observed	Observations/Evidence/ Gestures/ Social Interactions	Reflection Notes/Comments
10. Interacts with children to develop their self-esteem					
▪ Demonstrates active listening with children					
▪ Avoids judgmental statements					

▪ Responds to children's ideas					
▪ Recognizes children's efforts					
▪ Shows empathy and acceptance of children's feelings					
11. Shows sensitivity to individual children's needs					
▪ Respects and accommodates individual needs, personalities, and characteristics					
▪ Adapts and adjusts accordingly (instruction, curriculum, materials, etc.)					
▪ Conveys acceptance of individual differences (culture, gender, sensory needs, language, abilities) through planning, material selection, and discussion of topics					
12. Encourages autonomy					
▪ Provides children with opportunities to make choices					
▪ Allows children time to respond and/or complete task independently before offering assistance					
▪ Creates opportunities for decision making, problem solving, and working together					
▪ Teaches children strategies for self-regulating and/or self-monitoring behaviors					
13. Capitalizes on the presence of typically developing peers					
▪ Utilizes peers as models of desirable social behavior					
▪ Encourages peer partner/buddies (i.e., hold hands during transitions, play partner, clean-up buddy, etc.)					
▪ Demonstrates sensitivity to peer preferences and personalities					
▪ Shows an understanding of developmental levels of interactions and play skills					
14. Utilizes effective environmental arrangements to encourage social interactions					
▪ Considers peer placement during classroom activities					
▪ Effectively selects, arranges, and utilizes materials that promote interactions (high interest, novel, culturally meaningful)					
▪ Develops interaction opportunities within classroom routines (i.e., table captain, clean-up partner, etc.)					
15. Uses prompting and reinforcement of interactions effectively					
▪ Provides sincere, enthusiastic feedback to promote and maintain social interactions					
▪ Waits until interactions are finished before reinforcing; does not interrupt interactions					

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Models phrases children can use to initiate and encourage interactions					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensures that interactions are mostly child-directed not teacher-directed					
16. Provides instruction to aid in the development of social skills					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Includes social interaction goals in lesson					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teaches appropriate social skills through lessons and role-playing opportunities					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Incorporates cooperative games, lessons, stories, and activities that promote altruistic behavior into planning					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Structures activities to encourage and teach sharing					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Structures activities to encourage and teach turn taking					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Structures activities to encourage and teach requesting and distributing items					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Structures activities to encourage and teach working cooperatively					
17. Promotes identification and labeling of emotions in self and others					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Uses photographs, pictures, and posters that portray people in various emotional states					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Uses validation, acknowledgement, mirroring back, labeling feelings, voice tones, or gestures to show an understanding of children's feelings					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assists children in recognizing and understanding how a classmate might be feeling by pointing out facial expressions, voice tone, body language, or words					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Uses real-life situations to practice problem-solving, beginning with defining the problem and emotions involved					
18. Explores the nature of feelings and the appropriate ways they can be expressed					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teaches that all emotions are okay, but not all expressions are okay					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Labels own emotional states and provides an action statement (e.g., I am feeling frustrated so I better take some deep breaths to calm down)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Uses opportunities to comment on occasions when children state that they are feeling upset or angry but are remaining calm					

Appendix D

New Teacher Mentor Interview Protocol

Interview # _____

Interviewer: Joy Jones

Date: _____

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Joy Jones and I am a doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University conducting research for my dissertation study. This interview will take about 20 minutes and will include 7 questions regarding your school's New Teacher Mentor program. I would like your permission to audio record this interview so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know and we will stop. All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for my dissertation and help inform the administrative team on how this program can be improved. At this time I would like to ask for your verbal consent and also inform you that your participation in this interview also implies your consent. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return a page, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
2. How many years have you worked at this school?
3. What subjects are you certified in?
4. Are you teaching in your field of certification?
5. From your experience, what type of support do new teachers with 3 or less years of experience need to help them be successful? Could you please provide examples to illustrate your response?
6. Do the New Teacher Mentor program activities help improve new teacher performance?
7. What qualities do you feel a good mentor should have?
8. What type of support did you receive while participating in the New Teacher Mentor program? Could you please provide examples?
9. Do you feel the support you received was effective? Could you please provide examples to illustrate your response?

Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for your participation today. I appreciate all of your comments regarding your school's New Teacher Mentor Program

Appendix E

New Teacher Mentor

Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Participants: _____

Facilitator: _____

Date: _____

Phase 1: Before the Focus Group

1. The focus group take will run 45 minutes in length.
2. The focus group will consist of the mentees that participated in the program.

Phase 2: Conducting the Focus Group

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Joy Jones and I am a graduate student at Kennesaw State University conducting a research project for my course on Advanced Qualitative research methods. This focus group interview will take about 45 minutes and will include questions regarding your school's New Teacher Mentor program. I would like your permission to audio record this interview so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know and we will stop. All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for class and help inform the administrative team on how this program can be improved. At this time I would like to ask for your verbal consent and also inform you that your participation in this interview also implies your consent. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return a page, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

Focus Group (Mentees)

1. Which topics covered during the first semester of the New Teacher Mentor program did you find relevant and helpful?
2. If you were designing this program, which topics would you change and how?
3. Do you feel as though the number of sessions was appropriate for the first semester?
4. What experience level should teachers have to participate in this program and how long should they participate?
5. Do you feel the program structure provided sufficient opportunities for your mentor to give you support?
6. What component(s) of the program would you change and how?

Before we conclude this focus group session, is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for your participation today. I appreciate all of your comments regarding your school's New Teacher Mentor Program.

Appendix F

Observational Protocol

Mentor/Mentee Discussions

This protocol is designed to provide the researcher with a method for conducting mentor/mentee discussions.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Length of activity: _____ minutes Location: _____ Participants: _____	
<i>Descriptive Notes</i> Physical Setting: visual Layout <div style="border: 1px solid blue; height: 150px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	<i>Reflective Notes</i> (Reflective comments questions to self, observations of nonverbal behavior, my interpretation.)
Description of participants Description of activities Description of individuals engaged in activity	(Reflective comments questions to self, observations of nonverbal behavior, my interpretation.)

Sequence of activity over time Interactions Unplanned events Participants comments: expressed in quotes	
(Researcher's observation of what seems to be occurring)	